

THE HIGH PRIEST'S GRAVE CHICHEN ITZA, YUCATAN, MEXICO

A Manuscript
BY
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Prepared for Publication, with Notes and Introduction
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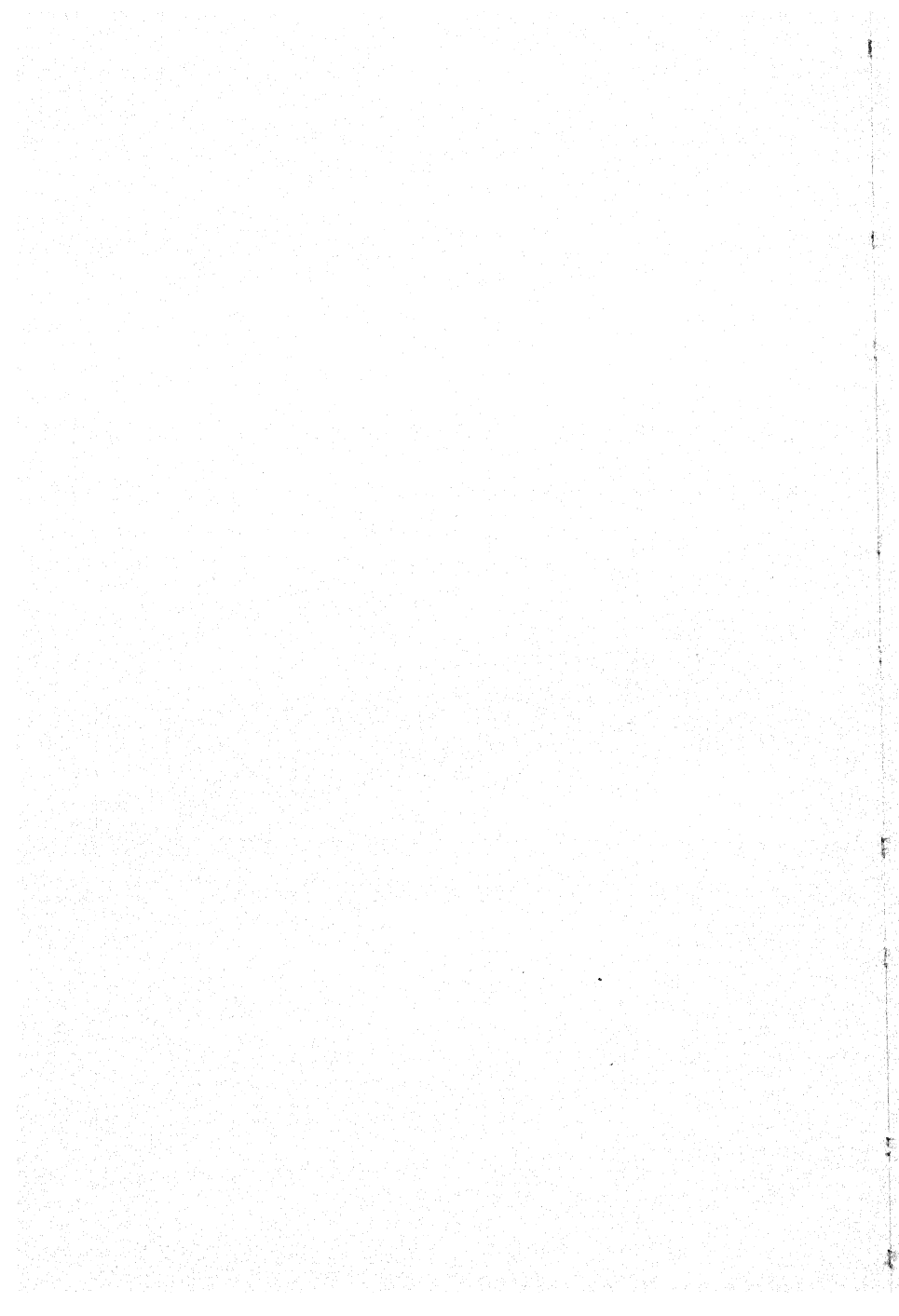
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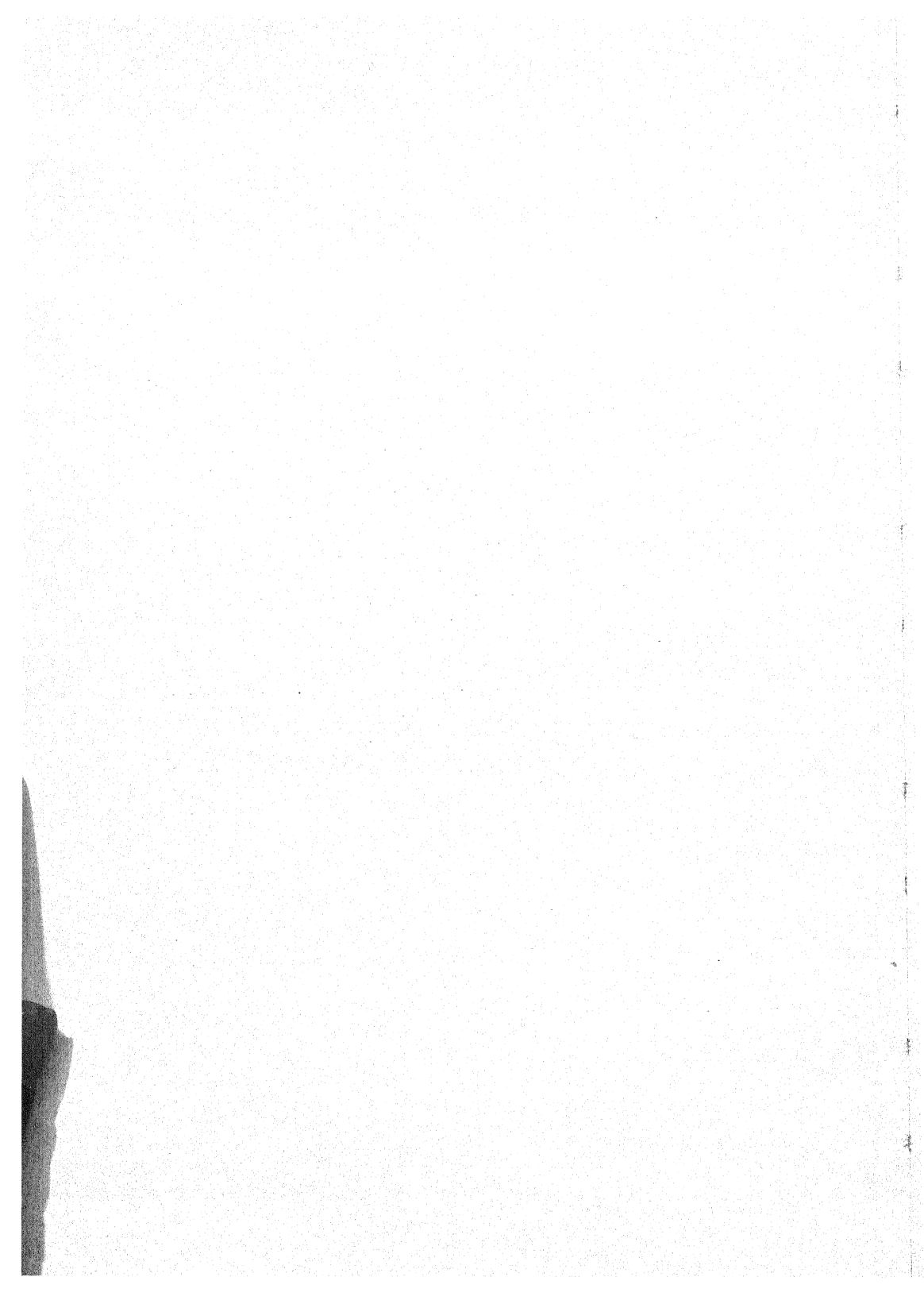
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THE HIGH PRIEST'S GRAVE CHICHEN ITZA, YUCATAN, MEXICO

INTRODUCTION

By J. ERIC THOMPSON

In 1896 the late Edward H. Thompson, at that time United States Consul in Progreso, Yucatan, Mexico, and owner of the hacienda of Chichen Itza, investigated some ruins on his estate. Some of the material he discovered found its way to the United States, where it was eventually purchased by Field Museum, together with Thompson's report on the excavations.

The most interesting of these investigations from the dramatic and scientific points of view, was that of the High Priest's Grave, or the Osario, a pyramid supporting a temple with such Mexican features as carved, square columns, an Atlantean figure, a feathered serpent portal, and exterior walls with batter. It is reached on all four sides by stairways provided with feathered serpent balustrades. B. M. Norman (1843, p. 125) was the first to describe, although but confusedly, this structure.

As Maudslay (Vol. III, text, p. 24) pointed out nearly half a century ago, the ground plan (Fig. 1) bears a very marked resemblance to that of the Castillo at this same site. Both structures possess stairways on all four sides, and the temples themselves have very similar ground plans incorporating an inner room within an enclosed outer arcade or ambulatory. A minor difference, perhaps of chronological significance, is that the Castillo portal has feathered serpents with round bodies, whereas the corresponding serpent columns of the High Priest's Grave are rectangular.

The location of the structure can be seen in the plans of the ruins published by Maudslay (Structure 9), Ruppert, and others. Its chief interest lies in the various burials in and beneath the shaft which descends from the floor of the temple to a depth approximately level with the exterior base of the pyramid. These burials, from a period subsequent to the introduction of copper artifacts in Yucatan, are representative of one of the periods of Mexican influence, either that which apparently started in 10.8.0.0.0, Katun 4 Ahau (A.D. 987) and ended in 10.19.0.0.0, Katun 8 Ahau (A.D. 1204) with the conquest of Chichen Itza by Hunac Ceel, or the later Mexican period of Mayapan domination which lasted from 10.19.0.0.0, Katun 8 Ahau

to 11.12.0.0.0, Katun 8 Ahau (A.D. 1461—J. E. Thompson, 1937). The presence of turquoise and crystal beads and late incensario forms would suggest the later period. Dates given in Christian chronology are according to the Goodman-Martinez-Thompson correlation, which makes 11.16.0.0.0, Katun 13 Ahau end in 1539, just prior to the Spanish conquest of Yucatan. This correlation

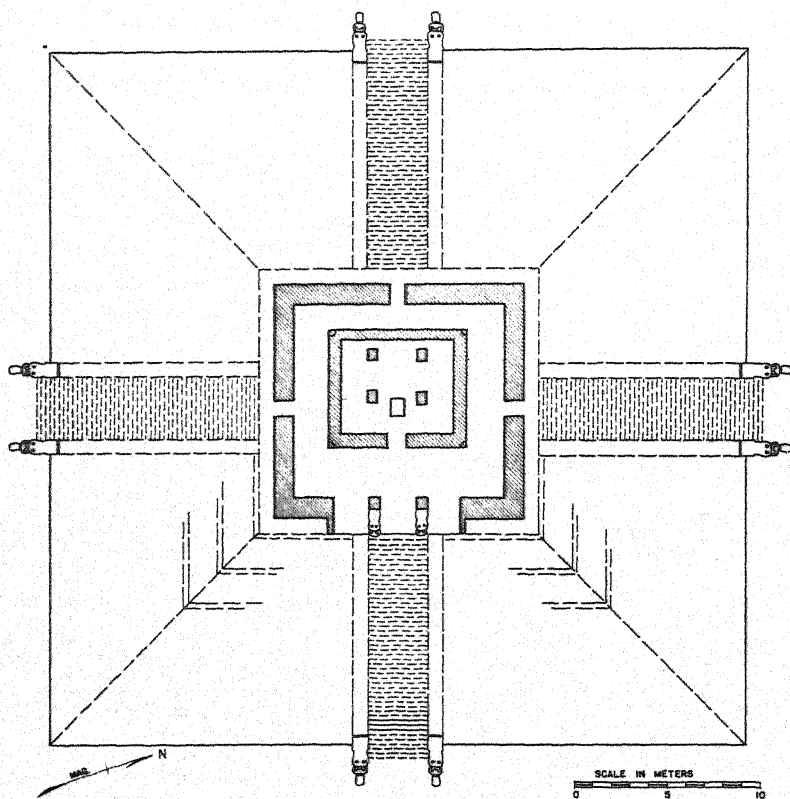


FIG. 1. Plan of High Priest's Grave structure (drawn by J. C. Harrington).

now receives wide support, but the possibility that the Katun 13 Ahau of the conquest was 11.3.0.0.0 cannot be entirely ignored. An 11.3.0.0.0 correlation would make all European dates 260 years later, and would require readjustments to the periods of Mexican influences.

In either case the burials found by Edward H. Thompson in the shaft and cavern beneath are of very considerable importance,

since at Chichen Itza there are no other definite associations of pottery types with copper artifacts.

Unfortunately the material in Field Museum is not listed by graves, and in some cases there is doubt as to whether specimens are actually from the High Priest's Grave. Nevertheless, associa-

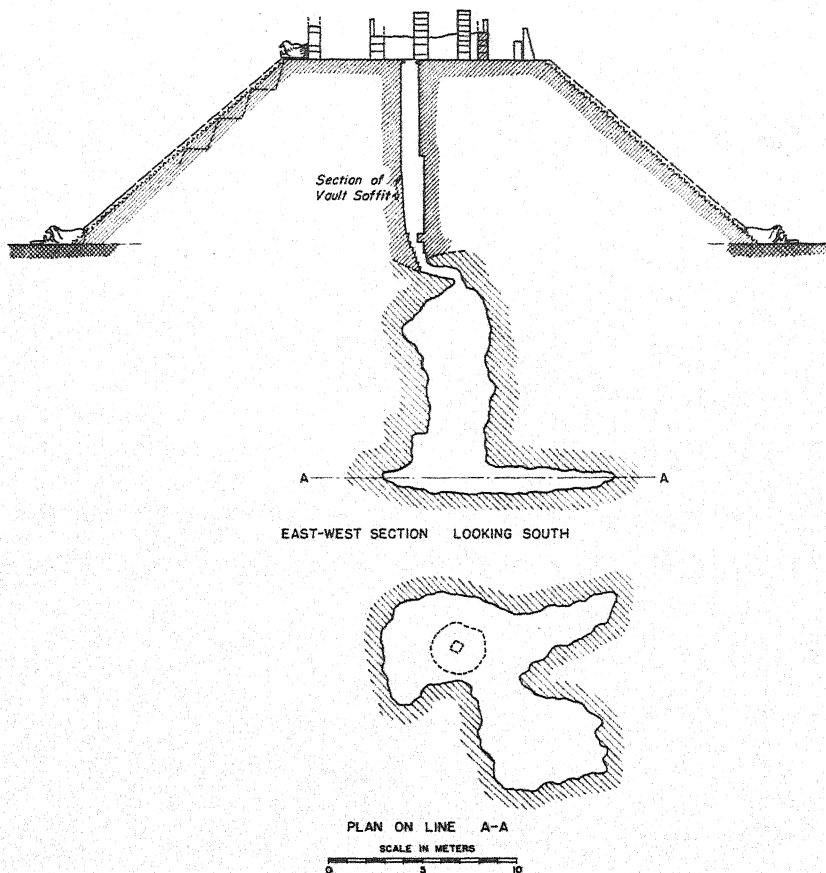


FIG. 2. Section through structure, showing shaft (drawn by J. C. Harrington).

tions of the principal finds, such as jade, a marble vessel, copper bells, and crystal, turquoise, and shell beads, with pottery vessels of definite forms, are not open to question.

The description of the excavations is contained in a letter to the late W. H. Holmes and in a report prepared in 1897 by E. H. Thompson for publication. It has been decided to publish these

as they were written except for minimal grammatical corrections. Although the data they contain might have been more ample, the style is a refreshing contrast to that of the present-day archaeologist who in his reports seeks to establish his profession as a science by reducing all data to graphs and mathematical formulae. Edward H.

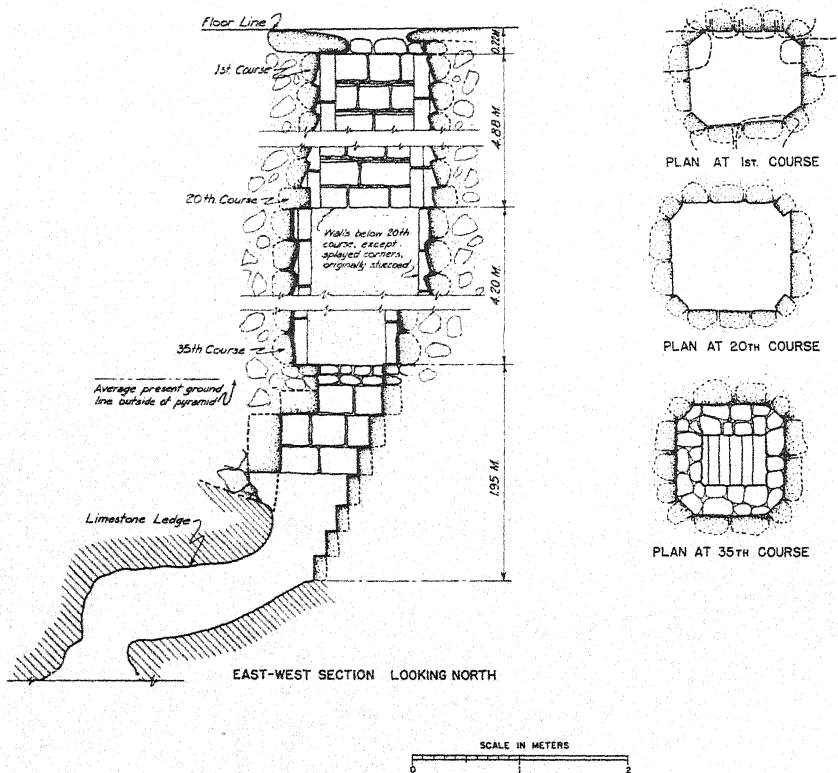
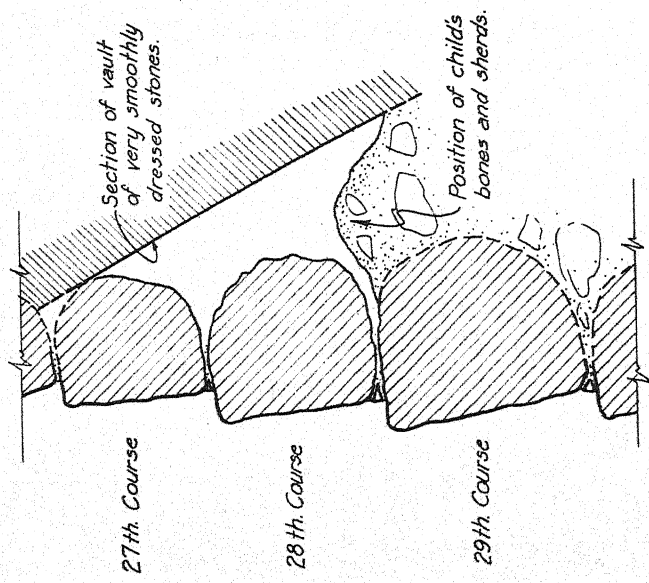


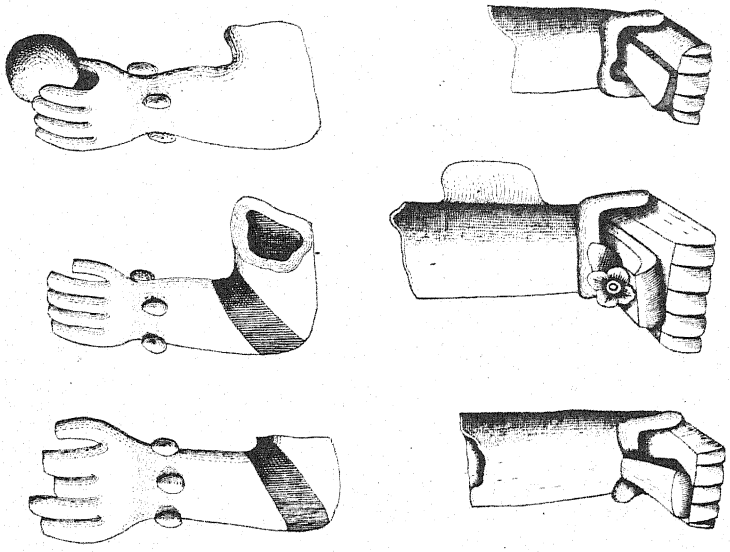
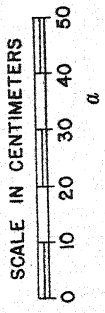
FIG. 3. Details of shaft (drawn by J. C. Harrington).

Thompson belonged to the old school that was content to consider archaeology as history.

A few inconsistencies and errors in the report are apparent. E. H. Thompson speaks of six graves in the shaft, whereas the grave-by-grave description indicates that there were seven. Measurements do not check with those of the plan, and finally one might note that the red stone beads are actually of shell, and the alabaster vase of marble. The slanting pillars to which Thompson refers are exterior corner stones or door jambs of the temple (cf. Morris,



SECTION OF EAST WALL OF SHAFT



b

FIG. 4. Architectural and ceramic details. a, Section of east wall of shaft, showing vault soffit behind (drawn by J. C. Harrington). b, Arms and legs of incense burners (drawn by E. H. Thompson).

Charlot, and Morris, figs. 10 and 90). Numbers given in parentheses are those used in the final section dealing with grave furniture. Matter in parentheses is by the writer of the introduction.

The positions of the two stones with hieroglyphs are shown in Maudslay's plan of the structure. They appear to be the fragments of a stela sawed up for re-use. The hieroglyphic material, now badly damaged, presents no material at present decipherable with the exception of an Initial Series Introductory Glyph, a sky-sun-earth glyph and a Kin or possible Kan compound. Beyer (1937) reviews this material (Fig. 15).

That the pyramid on which the temple stands contains an earlier structure was brought to light in 1936 by Mr. J. C. Harrington. While engaged in mapping the shaft, he found part of the soffit of a typical Maya vaulted roof, demonstrating beyond doubt that the shaft passes through a room of an earlier temple (Fig. 4, *a*). Buried temples are similarly enclosed within the pyramidal substructures of the Castillo and the Warriors.

Through the courtesy of Carnegie Institution of Washington the report is supplemented by the excellent plans and sections made in 1936 by Mr. J. C. Harrington and a number of photographs of architectural details taken principally by Dr. Sylvanus G. Morley and Mr. Karl Ruppert. Miss Anna O. Shepard has kindly identified temper of three of the vessels. The photograph of the date, with rubbing in position, was made by Mr. Conrad Kratz of Evansville, Indiana.

The writer of the notes is not related to the author.

PYRAMID WITH BURIAL WELL AND CENOTE CHAMBER BENEATH

By EDWARD H. THOMPSON

Hidden by the jungle growth that surrounds the great ruin group of Chichen Itza and about halfway between the Nunnery and the Tennis Court lies a mound about forty feet high. Its form is hidden by debris and vegetable growth. Only the closest search reveals the stones that here and there remain in place and indicate the original outline.

That it faced the east is evidenced by the fact that an imposing stairway, eleven feet wide, divided the eastern slope and led up to the crowning structure. Four great serpent heads, each over a yard high, guard the sides of this stairway, two at the base and two upon the terrace above. The wide-open jaws with bared fangs and protruded tongues were once painted in mixed colors, red predominating.

The stairway, ascending upward at an angle of 43°, had a length over all of forty-eight feet, the average lift and spread being exactly eleven inches.

The serpent heads at the base [Fig. 5] form the terminus of a series of stone sections that continue up the sides of the stairway and are evidently conventionalized serpent bodies but cannot compare in effect or artistic merit with the great serpent bodies that in massive undulations once guarded the angles of the great pyramid of the Castillo and made it the antique gem of the New World. [E. H. Thompson was mistaken in thinking that the angles of the Castillo represent serpents.]

The heads that guard the stairways upon the terrace above have their bodies conventionalized into handsomely formed square pillars, several sections of which are carved with the usual feathered ornamentation of this symbol [Fig. 6]. [These serpent columns supported the wooden lintels, now rotted away, of the doorway, and do not form part of the stairway.]

The upper terrace was, when perfect, about fifty feet long by forty-five wide. It is now covered with ruined stone work and debris to the depth of several feet, through which project various stone pillars both plain and carved.

On each side of the upper terrace, except that occupied by the great stairway previously described, are two curious stone posts. They are placed upright but are cut aslant at an angle of 82°. Each

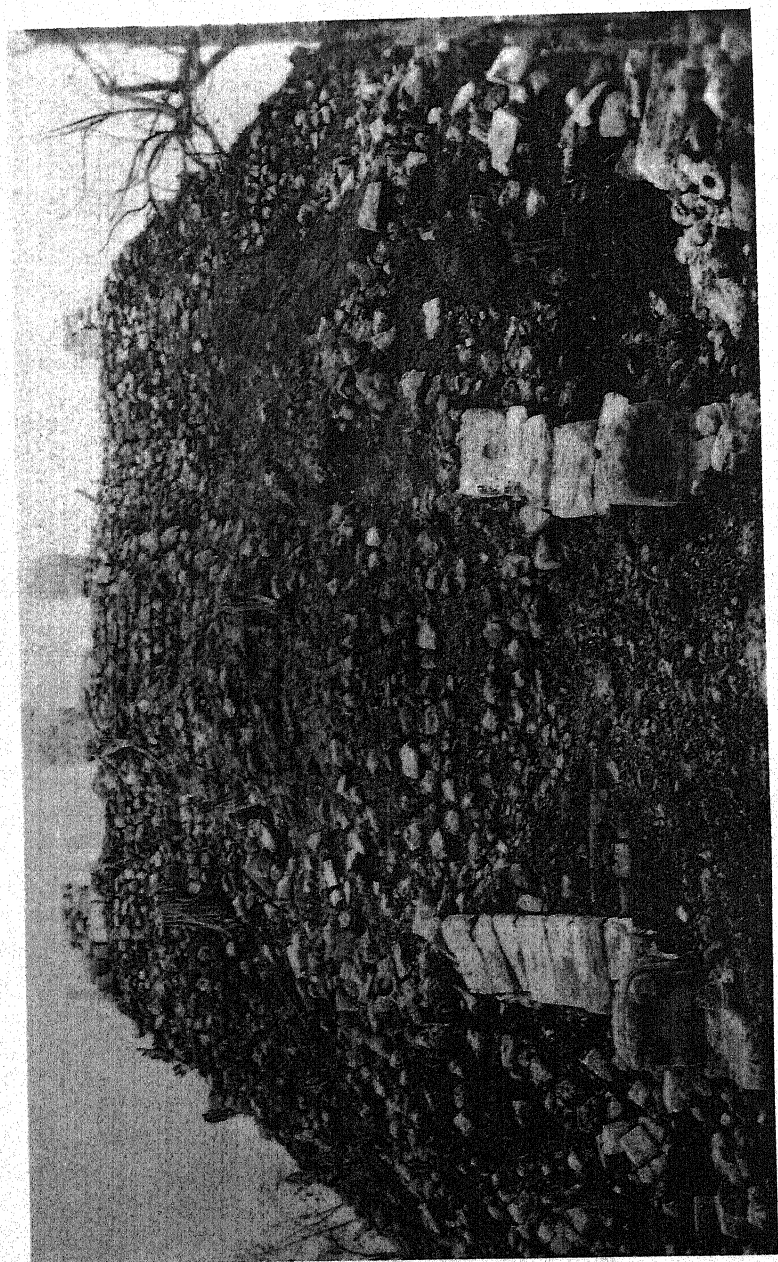


FIG. 5. Structure from east, showing feathered serpent balustrades. Serpent portal columns are visible at top of photograph (courtesy Carnegie Institution of Washington).

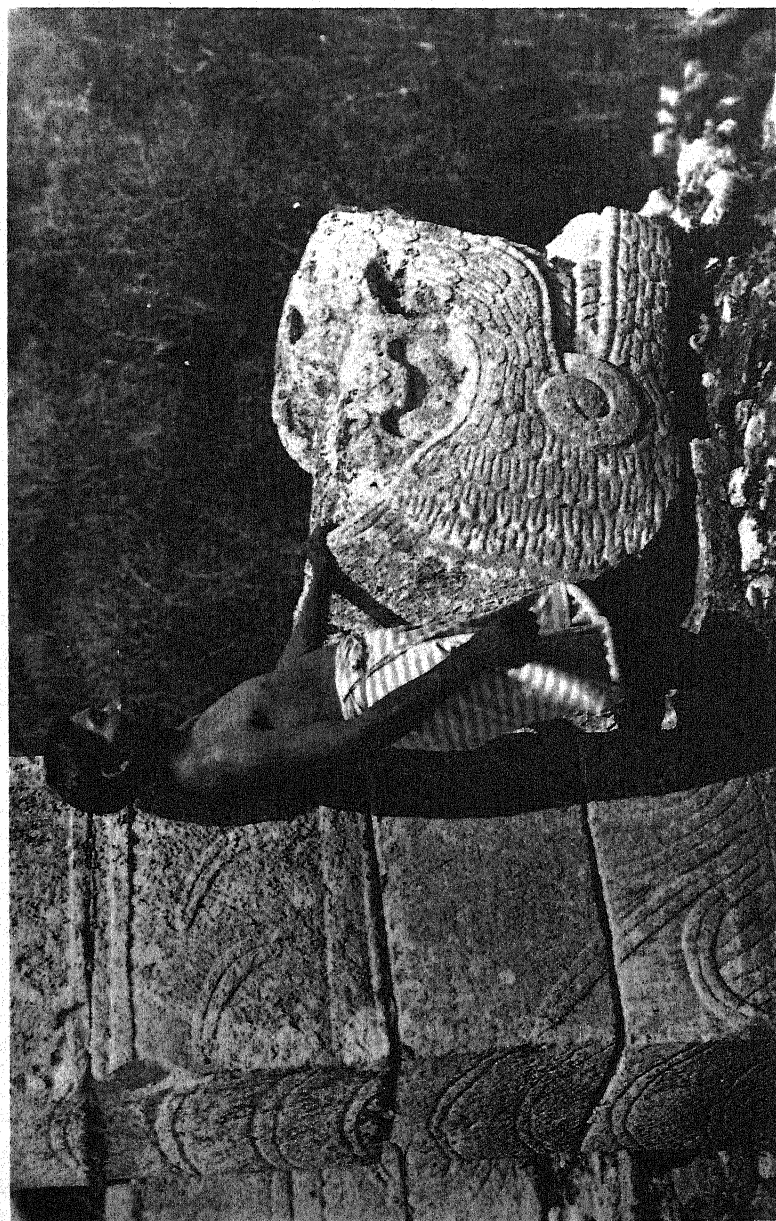


Fig. 6. South serpent column of portal (courtesy Carnegie Institution of Washington).

is backed by a second post straight cut and firmly placed. These slanting posts are separated by a space less than two feet wide. From their bases down the inclined plane runs a weltlike projection that might indicate the former existence of a stairway. Yet this would seem an unnecessary structure. It may be, however, that some religious rite or observance required these narrow stairways. [Actually there were stairways on all sides. The stones with slanting faces are corner jambs of the small exterior ambulatory doorways, the slanting area corresponding to the batter at the base of exterior walls of the Mexican period.]

Besides these paired slanting pillars there are single ones to the right and left of the serpents' heads upon this same upper terrace. The angle of the one on the right, which is still firmly in place, is 82° . The other one has fallen over owing to the breaking away of the walls of the pyramid, and I could not determine its angle, but from my estimate I believe it to have had the same as the other. A stone post, exactly a foot square and seven and a half feet high, is firmly fixed in place in the northeast portion of the platform and a similar one upon the southwest. I believe there were similar posts on the other two corners, but ruin has overtaken them, and the places they would have occupied are now yawning chasms over thirty feet deep.

Faint traces of carvings still exist upon one of these posts, apparently hieroglyphics [cf. Maudslay plan and text], while the slanting pillars are perfectly plain.

Seventeen feet to the south [west] of the squared pillars of the serpent, and consequently several feet south [west] of the exact center of the upper terrace are four handsomely squared pillars. Some [all] have traces of carvings, which, though nearly obliterated by time, show, by means of the magnifying glass, remains of red paint in the hollows—a striking evidence of the durability of some, at least, of the pigments of this ancient people [Figs. 7-10].

Within the floor material between the pair of pillars on the north [east], securely sealed up by means of heavy, rectangular stone tablets, we found a well-like vault. First testing for mephitic gases, I caused myself to be lowered down. At a depth of twelve feet I stood upon a mass of worked stones whose angles and points showed that they had been thrown in without care or order. Looking around me and upward toward the sky, I found myself in most curious quarters. A deep shaft like a rectangular well extended from the surface above until buried beneath the debris upon which I stood,

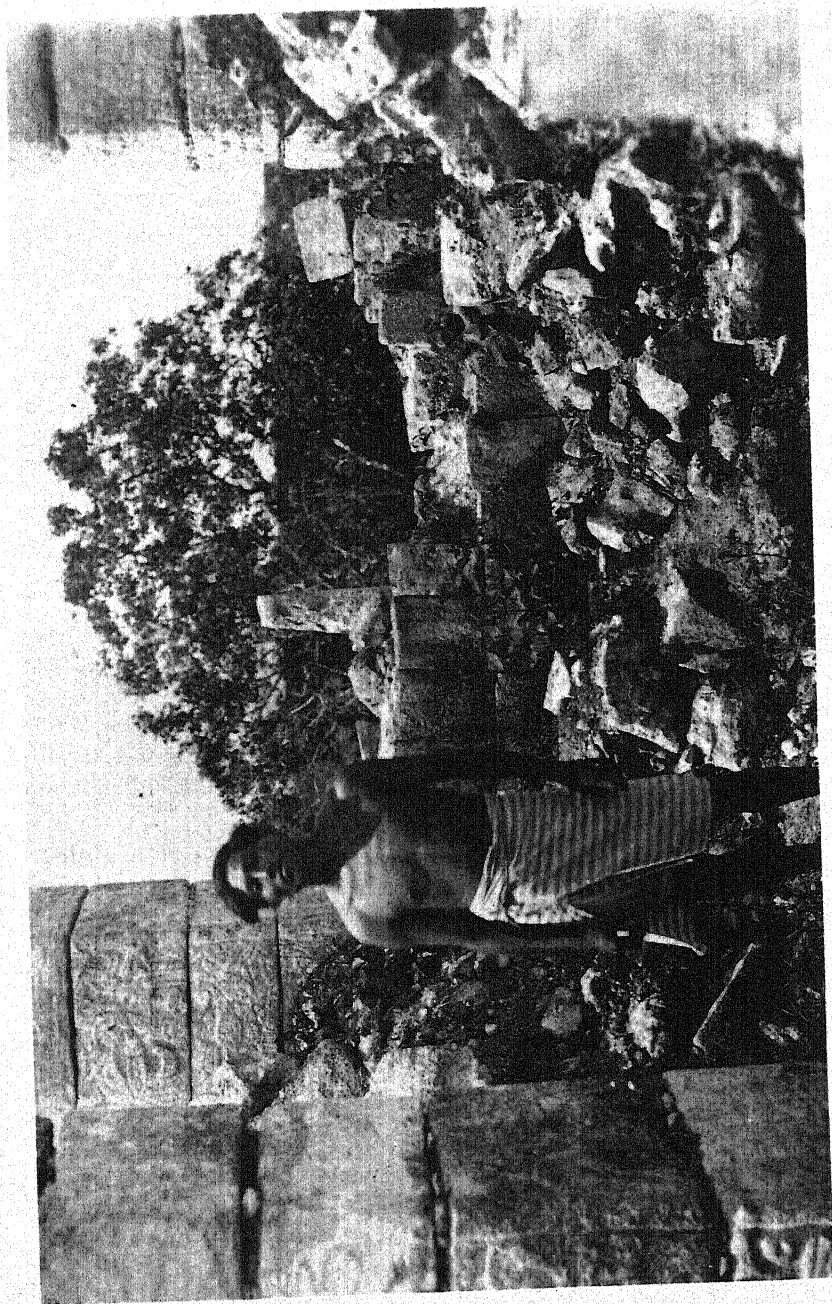


FIG. 7. Sanctuary from east. The back wall visible in middle background with jamb of west doorway of ambulatory behind it (courtesy of Carnegie Institution of Washington).

and how much farther could only be determined when the excavation was finished [Figs. 2, 3, and 12].

In order to give an intelligible description of this sepulchral shaft, I will anticipate my account in part, and state that it was found to be a little over thirty feet deep. The four sides were of cut stone well worked and laid in a most singular manner, each edge overlapping the one just above it. The projecting portions varied from an inch to nearly two inches, and thus afforded a very convenient foothold and materially aided us in our ingress and egress. The four corners were finished in a striking manner by means of vertical ribbons of stone placed diagonally with respect to the side [Fig. 12].

At a depth of fourteen feet the rectangular shaft enlarges suddenly a foot or more, and then continues downward, not vertically as before, but gradually converging until at the bottom of the shaft the dimensions are reduced to four feet by five. The enlarged portion was constructed after the same manner as the vertical portion, but not finished so perfectly. The stones were not as well laid, nor the joints broken as often, and the general appearance was cruder.

As I have stated, this shaft was filled up to within twelve feet of the surface with stones and other material. Many of these stones were cut and finished, and had served as portions of structures at some period. They had not fallen by chance into this shaft. Neither had they become dislodged and fallen from above during the crash and vibration consequent upon the fall of some great structure above them.

The mouth of the shaft was perfectly sealed by stone slabs, rough, but effective. The sides of the shaft were perfect save in one spot midway from the top where one stone was missing.

By the use of windlass and pulleys the work of excavation was carried on slowly but carefully. Some of these stones embedded in the material weighed over fifty pounds, and a due regard for our lives made me proceed with caution. A man penned in a cavity thirty feet deep, only four feet by five in dimensions, may be pardoned for taking no unnecessary chances with suspended rocks.

The first few feet excavated consisted of large, worked stones embedded in mold, fine rootlets like twine, and insect casings, principally beetle wings. This continued until we began to think that the ancients had made the shaft and in a fit of insanity had filled it up again with worked stones, cobbles, and dirt. Nevertheless, I kept pegging away at the bottom of this pit, never removing a stone until I had examined it in position and assured myself of its purport.

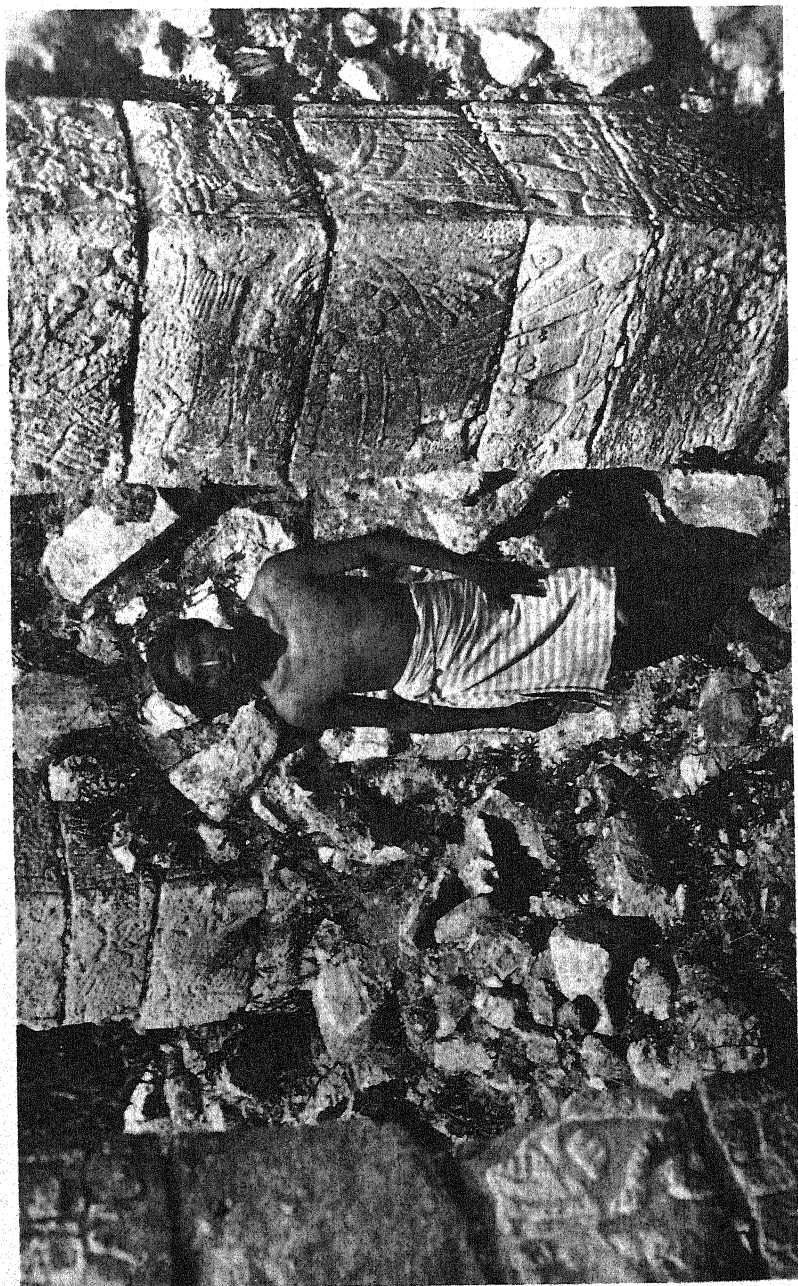


FIG. 8. Sanctuary from northeast. Note the hieroglyphic inscription visible on column to left (courtesy of Carnegie Institution of Washington). See Fig. 10 for full view of this column.

At last, at a depth of sixteen feet I came upon a grave [1]—two parallel lines of worked stones, separated by a space of two feet and extending across the shaft from east to west. The stones had been overturned and pressed into the earth by the superincumbent material, and the heavy slab covers had been dislodged and broken by the great stones evidently thrown down from above, but the grave was clear and unmistakable. With brush and trowel I at once went carefully to work. Lifting off the broken pieces of what was once the roughhewn stone tops I found the fragments of a skeleton beneath, together with two red vessels, one crushed into fragments and the other entire.

In the earth material around this grave were a large number of potsherds, principally of the small red vessels. Beneath this grave I came upon a second layer of large stones, about two feet thick, then a mixture of earth and mortar containing many potsherds of the class previously described, together with pieces of a very thick ware, like incense burners. Beneath this then appeared the outlines of a second grave [2]. Around this I found red potsherds and the unmistakable fragments of a handsome terra-cotta mask that generally ornaments the front of the more important incense burners. This second grave, like the first, was almost obliterated in outline and, like it, contained a much broken skeleton and two small red vessels, cracked, but perfect in outline. Besides these there were two copper bells and several jade beads.

The finding of these copper bells filled me with the keenest pleasure, for they were the first I had ever encountered. In fact, the only one other recorded case of their being found in Yucatan was in 1887 when, during the construction of the Peto Railroad, the workmen in excavating a mound in the path of the railway found a jar containing over thirty copper bells, several of which the owner of the road, Don Rodolfo Canton, very kindly gave me. I have learned to regard all finds not made under my own eye with some doubt. However honest a workman may be, his judgment as to intrusive burials is not apt to be of much value. These two bells that I found were well shaped and nearly three times the size of those found on the Peto road.

Beneath the crumbling material and light-brown dirt that formed the floor of this grave came the usual layer of stone, then the dirt material that surrounded and covered the third grave. In this material I found the fragments of a curious green painted vessel,

a green and blue painted clown-like head of terra cotta, a terra-cotta mask, and the usual red potsherds and fragments of an incense burner.

Within the grave [3] were the fragments of apparently several skeletons much broken and mixed, one whole, and several broken vessels, some very fine jade beads of a high polish, and several beads of a hard-grained red stone.

Then beneath the floor material were the great stones, the fine earth filled with potsherds, and a fourth grave. In this grave [4] we found the usual potsherds and many pendants of jade.

In the southeast corner of the vault was a little heap of what appeared to be verdigris but proved to be twenty-two small copper bells, almost shapeless from the oxidation and incrustation. As I moved them some of the mold of centuries fell away, the little stone balls inside moved and gave forth a clear, musical tinkle. Several of these bells were cemented together by oxidization so firmly that I think the metal would give as soon as the adherent verdigris.

In the northwest corner a second dusty heap resolved itself into shining beads of clear rock crystal and polished jade. These finds look small and insignificant beside the golden treasures of Mycenae, yet, as coming from Yucatan and as the first scientific recorded finds of the kind from this region, they are in their way just as important to science as golden cups or jeweled tiaras.

The grave held three small red tripod vessels, one so absolutely triturerated that no amount of care would make it useful as a specimen. Beside one of the vessels in the northern corner of the grave I found a round jade bead, several red beads, and a handsomely carved figure of jade. This amulet is the finest specimen of its class I have yet seen as coming from Yucatan.

At this point I was obliged to discontinue the work, for a long period of rains ensued which might have caused earth-slides and thus endangered our lives. I therefore braced up the well-like shaft, erected over it a protective cover of palm leaves, and left it until a more propitious time.

Once again at work, I found the same sequence of great stones, fine earth containing potsherds, one whole tripod vessel, and four crystal beads, three copper bells, several small jades, red stone and nephritic stone beads. Inside the grave [5] was the usual skeleton in a bad state of preservation, a red tripod vessel, and several jade and red stone beads. Directly over the grave upon the stone capping

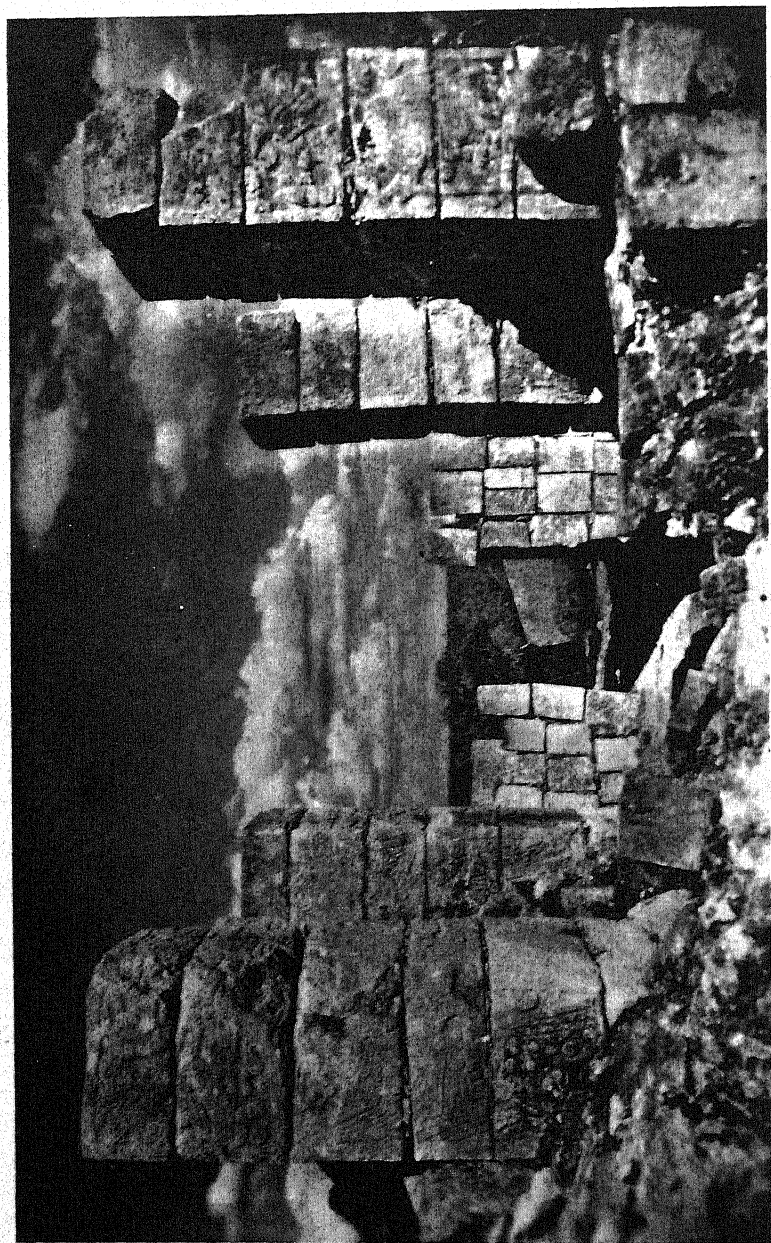


FIG. 9. Sanctuary from west, showing doorway to ambulatory. Tail of a fallen serpent portal column visible in background (courtesy of Carnegie Institution of Washington).

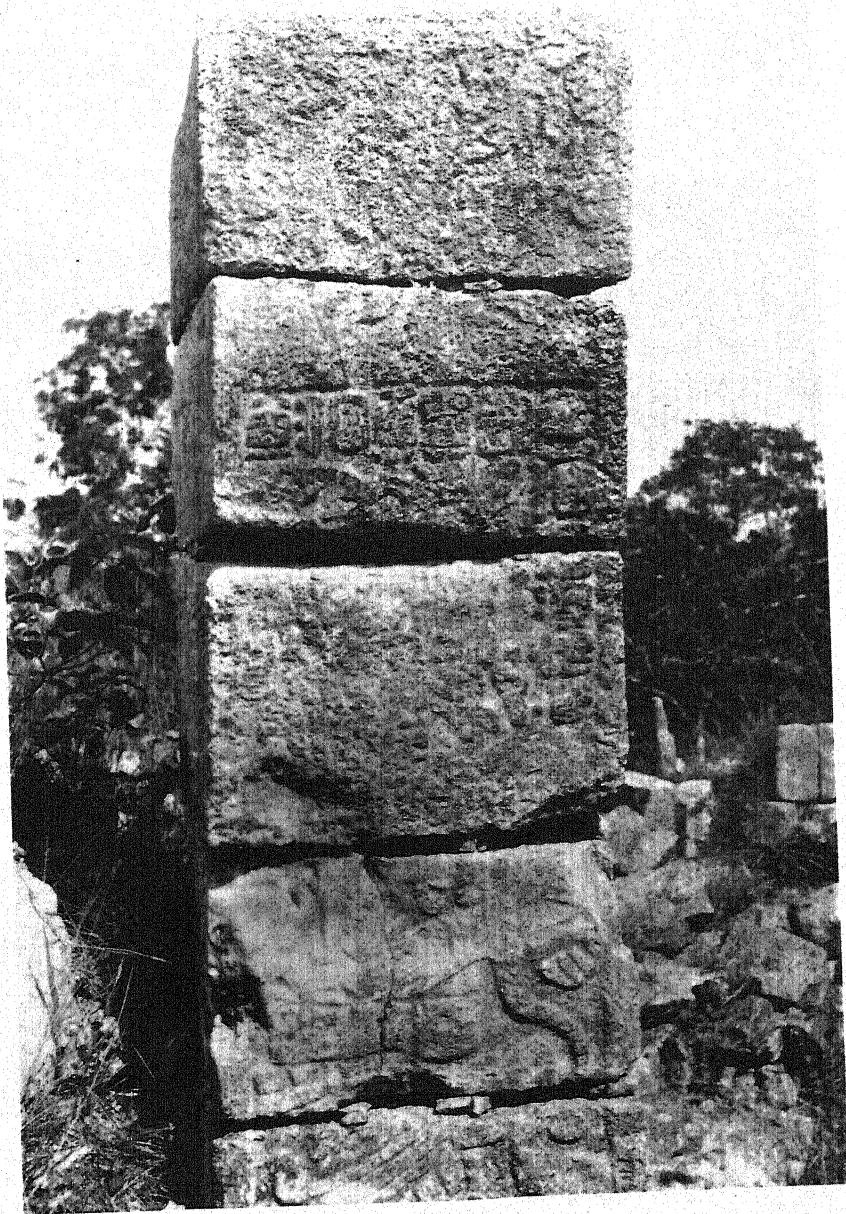


FIG. 10. East view of column of hieroglyphic inscription. The date is fairly certain as 2 Ahau 18 Mol, falling in Tun 11 of the Katun (10.9.0.0 0) ending on 2 Ahau (courtesy of Carnegie Institution of Washington).

that once covered it I found a curious resin-like mass lying upon and covered by thick layers of ashlike debris. A heavy stone completely covered it. It was thus hermetically sealed and preserved. I have an idea that it may be the incense used by the ancients. I tried a fragment with a lighted match and it gave forth a clean aromatic odor. I recollect once having tried a little globe of incense still left in an ancient incense burner. As the odor of the burning fragment was wafted toward me, it instantly brought to my mind this experience of several years before.

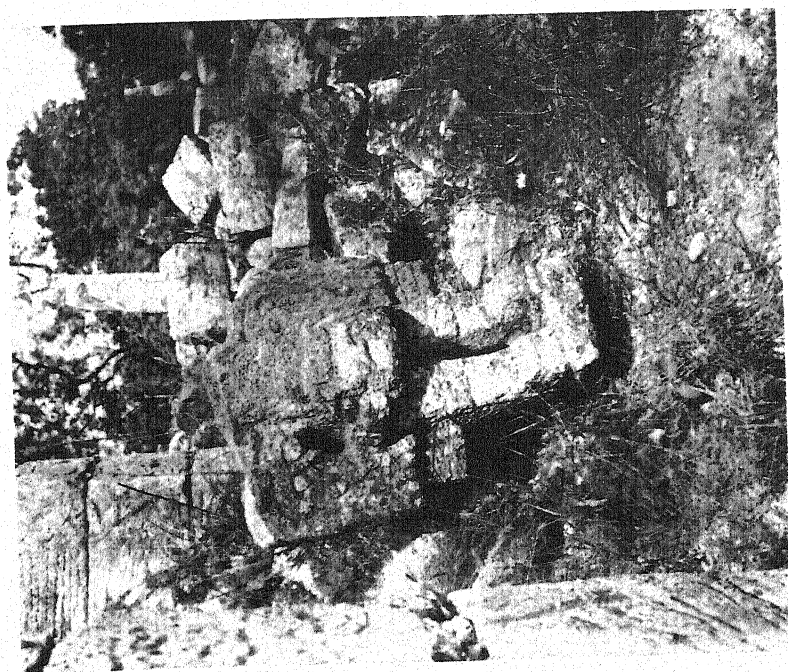
The sixth grave [6] of the shaft was found in the usual sequence, and the surrounding earth yielded votive offerings of broken vessels, jade beads, some very handsome red stone beads, several copper bells, and three crystal beads. Inside the grave the skeleton was simply a mass of lime dust; the two vessels encountered were red tripod vessels, one of which was ornamented in a manner not before noted. The bottom was covered with incised or scratched lines evidently made with some toothed implement while the vessel was yet unbaked. Most of the potsherds found in this grave were of this incised pattern.

The seventh and last grave [7] was so completely crushed out of all shape that an indiscriminate commingling of potsherds of the incised pattern previously mentioned, broken stones, and detritus were all that were visible. Patient work revealed three crushed copper bells, a broken crystal bead, several jade beads, a large jade bead calcined by fire, a terra-cotta vase much broken, but of rather uncommon form, ornamented with a curious pattern in black lines, charcoal, and a couple of small pieces of obsidian. Besides these finds were a second piece of the material that I have before described as incense and several fragments of stucco apparently from the walls of some structure, painted a clear blue color, made, as an artist told me, with some oil or oily substance. This pigment was almost as clear and fine as if fresh.

It is a noteworthy fact that up to the present time these graves have yielded none of the hitherto ordinary patterns of vessels and even among the potsherds intermixed in the debris around the graves the classes that hitherto have formed the largest portion of finds, viz. the plain and striated patterns, are almost entirely wanting. Red ware of all sizes and shapes, but principally fragments of small tripod vessels, constitutes the bulk of the potsherds encountered. At least 50 per cent of these vessels, when whole, were painted entirely, or in part, with a dark-slate color, inclining toward blue.



a



b

FIG. 11. Decorative elements, probably from the façade. *a*, Seated figure, dressed as owl. *b*, Standing figure, with plumage. Both have tenons at back (courtesy of Carnegie Institution of Washington).

The greater portion had a wide band of this pigment running around the inner rim of the vessel.

Neither was there found a single arrowhead. These facts surprised me as they are so different from the experiences during my past explorations.

Beneath the grave the trowel rang upon the cut stone of the floor at a distance of thirty feet from the surface of the mound above. As my brush carefully cleared off the dirt from the floor preparatory to sending it to the sieve above, I found myself in a rectangular space forty inches square. Nearly in the center of this space I noted a stone of a peculiar finished appearance. The inner edges of two of the surrounding stones were smoother than should have been the case naturally. Carefully working with my heavy hunting knife and trowel, I succeeded in lifting, without much effort, the stone that, while just as heavy to all appearances, had been skillfully cut to half the usual thickness, and was, therefore, easily moved by the initiated. Beneath me appeared a dark space half-filled with dirt. I projected the light of my lantern as far as possible, but the intercepting material prevented any intelligent observation and would do so until cleared out.

Little by little I excavated the material filling this pit. With much labor, in a most cramped and uncomfortable position, in an opening only thirty-two inches square, I excavated the material and passed it to a native who placed it in a basket in which it was hauled up to the light of day, where the sieve and last investigation awaited it.

Although jade and crystal beads and copper bells appeared from time to time, the material in general was mixed with much ashes and burned stone, and for the first time among the ruins of Yucatan I found charred human bones. I also found one jade pendant completely changed by the action of heat. I extracted a great many stones and one portion of an image blackened and almost calcined by the action of heat.

As the work progressed and I got deeper and deeper into the pit, I found gradually appearing to view a narrow stairway just two feet wide—the width of the narrow opening above me. I continued working, sprawled out like a lizard for want of space, until I had cleared off and sent up the debris that covered the seven steps of the stairway and left me a space still cramped, but more bearable.

At a depth of six feet seven inches from the mouth of the secret entrance, the last step of the cut stone stairway appeared, and the

passage seemed to have a gentle descent to the north[west]. Apparently, the stairway had originally contained nine steps, but as we were now beneath the actual level of the outside world, the passage, the rough vault above, and the steps were cut out of the solid rock, but the steps had become partially worn away by use, leaving a series of lumps in their place. As the descent to a distance of nine feet was gradual, their need was not greatly felt. On I burrowed, finding rich specimens constantly. Human bones were abundant. Potsherds existed, but not of incense burners nor sacred vessels. I noted here that the striated ware [sherds of unslipped storage jars?] found so often in my work at Labna and elsewhere, was again in evidence.

Still deeper and deeper I burrowed, completely out of sound of human life. At short intervals one of my natives would wriggle down from his position just above me, and taking the material accumulated, ashes and stones, work his way to the trapdoor, fill the basket, shout to the one above to haul up, then crawl down again and cover the secret entrance with a thick block of wood, lest the ascending basket should tumble a loose stone upon his skull. Then he would crouch back into his lair to await the shout from above that the basket was once more lowered and in readiness to be filled again.

I had already found a fine idol and a head of an idol or some important person, carved out of limestone, well shaped and still bearing traces of paint, a number of crystal beads, copper bells, and jade beads of remarkable fineness, when at a distance of nine feet from the last step the passage seemed to end in a solid wall having a large slab of worked stone resting at its base directly in line with the gently inclined passage. Working my way slowly along, I gradually removed the fine material around the stone and noted the presence of a strong draft of cold air at the same instant that I found amid the debris a very remarkable jade ornament or amulet in the shape of a fish. It was the largest and finest jade amulet that I had yet found in Yucatan, although not so finely carved and polished as the amulet previously described.

I stole a moment from my work to gloat over the find, and then went on with my digging. I gradually loosened the stone, and as I lifted it away, I found beneath an opening as black as night, from which poured a rush of air as chill as the breath of death. "It is the mouth of the underworld," stammered my two boys, as they cowered close to me. "If it is, we will soon have a chance to see what the underworld is like," I said, smiling at the wonderment and fear

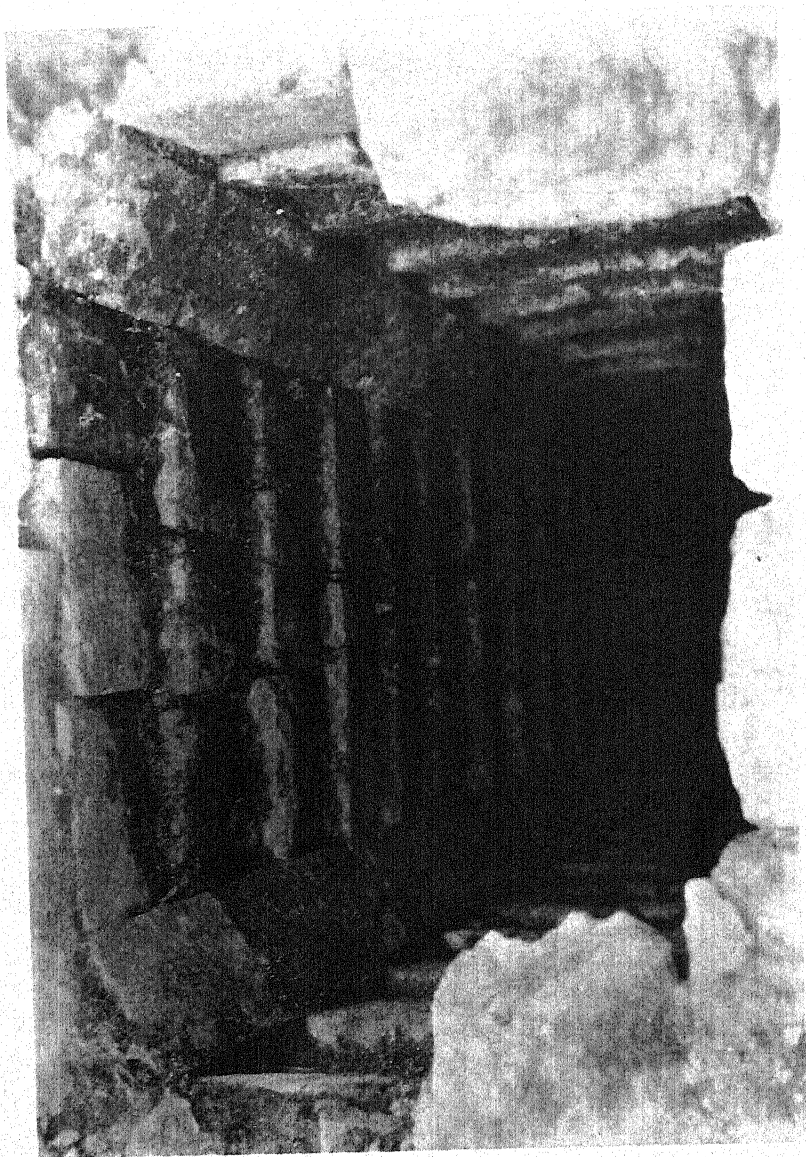
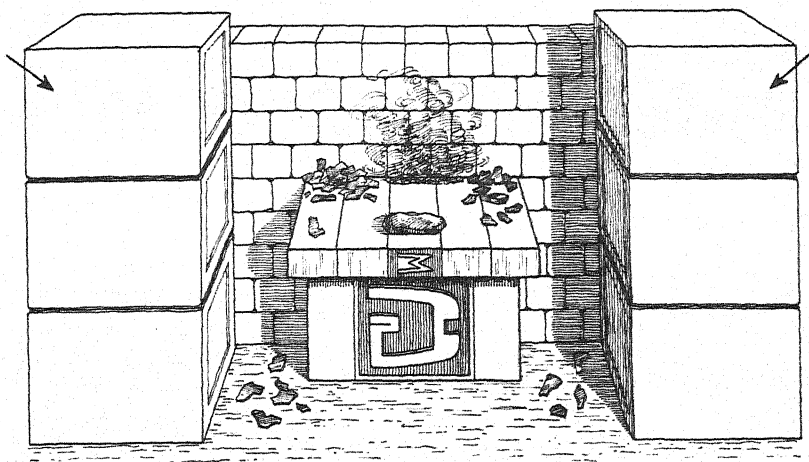
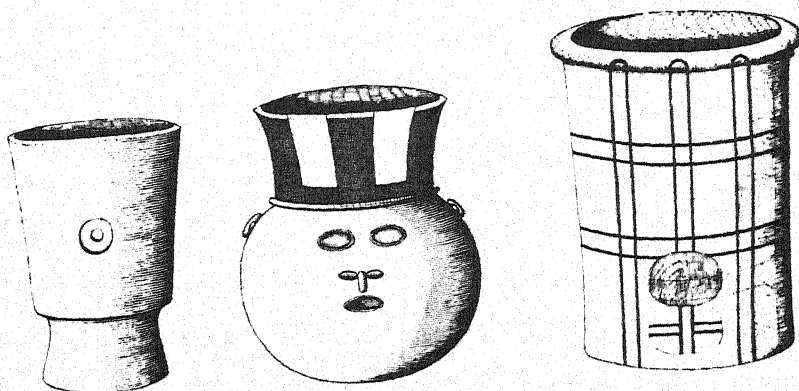


FIG. 12. View down the shaft (courtesy of Carnegie Institution of Washington).



a



b

FIG. 13. a, Altar of sanctuary. Note that columns do not touch back wall.
b, Pottery vessels from sanctuary (drawings by E. H. Thompson).

expressed on their countenances. In fact, I was nearly as excited as they, though in a different sense.

The inclined plane of the floor of the passage was such that a vigorous push would be all that was needed, apparently, to send an inert body down the passage through the uncovered mouth of the pit—the sides of which seemed to have been smoothed by much use—into the inky depths below. I lit the small lantern of my kit and attaching it to my metal tapeline, leaned over the hole and swinging it clear of the side, commenced paying out the tape. Down it went, until I thought it would never reach bottom. Finally, at a depth of fifty-two feet it rested upon dry bottom, as I could easily see. This point settled, I then had a strong native take close hold of each of my legs and let myself down beyond the mouth until my head was beyond the wall of the mouth and into the pit itself. Thus, although head downward, I was, by gradually hauling up the lantern, able to study the formation of the pit for future use.

The next day was spent in arranging for the descent, and the following day I was let down by means of a rope and blocks into the pit. My previous experience in subterranean chambers had familiarized me with this class of work.

The clear flame of my lantern relieved me of any fear of mephitic air, and with my keen bowie knife between my teeth ready for instant use, and lighted lantern in one hand, I examined the walls of the pit as I went down.

The pit seemed to be in part the work of nature, but greatly changed and enlarged by the work of the ancient people. Projecting ridges of hard, white limestone that gave forth a metallic sound as of steel when hit with the back of my knife, were separated by layers of soft white earth called *sahkab* [*sascab*] by the Mayas. Once in a while I noted a layer of white earth, like flour in color and texture. This is called *Kub* [*cuut*] in Maya. It is quite rare and is eagerly sought by the native pottery makers to mix with the earth called *kat* [*cab*] in the manufacture of the finer pottery.

The average diameter of the pit was eighteen feet until within fifteen feet of the bottom, where it widened and ended in a small chamber twenty-five feet wide having seven small passages or ramifications extending in different directions.

I touched bottom upon a heap of earth near the center of the chamber and directly under the orifice where the candlelights of my anxious boys gleamed like stars above me. I sent up a reassuring

call that all was well and commenced my investigations. My brush had hardly raised dust when I found that my expectations were to be realized. A bead of jade over five inches in circumference, beautifully formed and so polished that it gleamed under the light of my lantern, was right at my feet, and close beside was a beautiful jade amulet. A little to one side were fragments of a vase, the like of which has never been dreamed of as belonging to this people. Not large, but made of a translucent mineral very much resembling alabaster, its artistic finish and general appearance make it easily the finest gem of the class ever found in Yucatan. It is unique of its kind.

I very soon saw that to make a systematic study of this place was the work of days of hard labor, and gave the signal for my now impatient boys to come down and share the interesting work. Down they came like monkeys, their black eyes shining at the prospect, for they had, by their long service with me in this kind of work, become as interested in specimens as if they were archaeologists of the first rank.

Platting off the bottom of the pit, we went to work by the light of many candles. There being little or no draft at the bottom of the pit, the candles burned quietly, needing no protection. Thus we worked for days from early morning until sundown. Buried beneath ninety feet of earth and rocky crust we knew neither daylight nor evening darkness, only candlelight. We ate our lunch in the intervals of the work, seated in crannies of the pit, and the brown dust that covered all things had so permeated us all, that no one at a casual glance could distinguish the white explorer from his brown-skinned workmen. Down to the very rock floor of the pit we went, the steel tapping rod entering into the floor two feet and still ringing true to prove the fact.

The mound of debris was eight feet deep from top to floor, but around the outer edge of the chamber the deposit was only three feet deep. Throughout all this material were found human bones in fragments, some being half-charred and commingled with half-calcined stone.

The specimen-bearing layer of material seemed to be about nine inches thick, although human bones were found throughout. Beneath this was a mass of mingled *sahkab* nodules, general detritus, fragments of human bones, pieces of the same stucco painted blue found in the upper pit or shaft, and large stones, some rough and some worked, but few beads or interesting specimens.



FIG. 14. Atlantean figure. The simian-like features include a wedge-shaped snout reminiscent of the Mexican Eecatl.

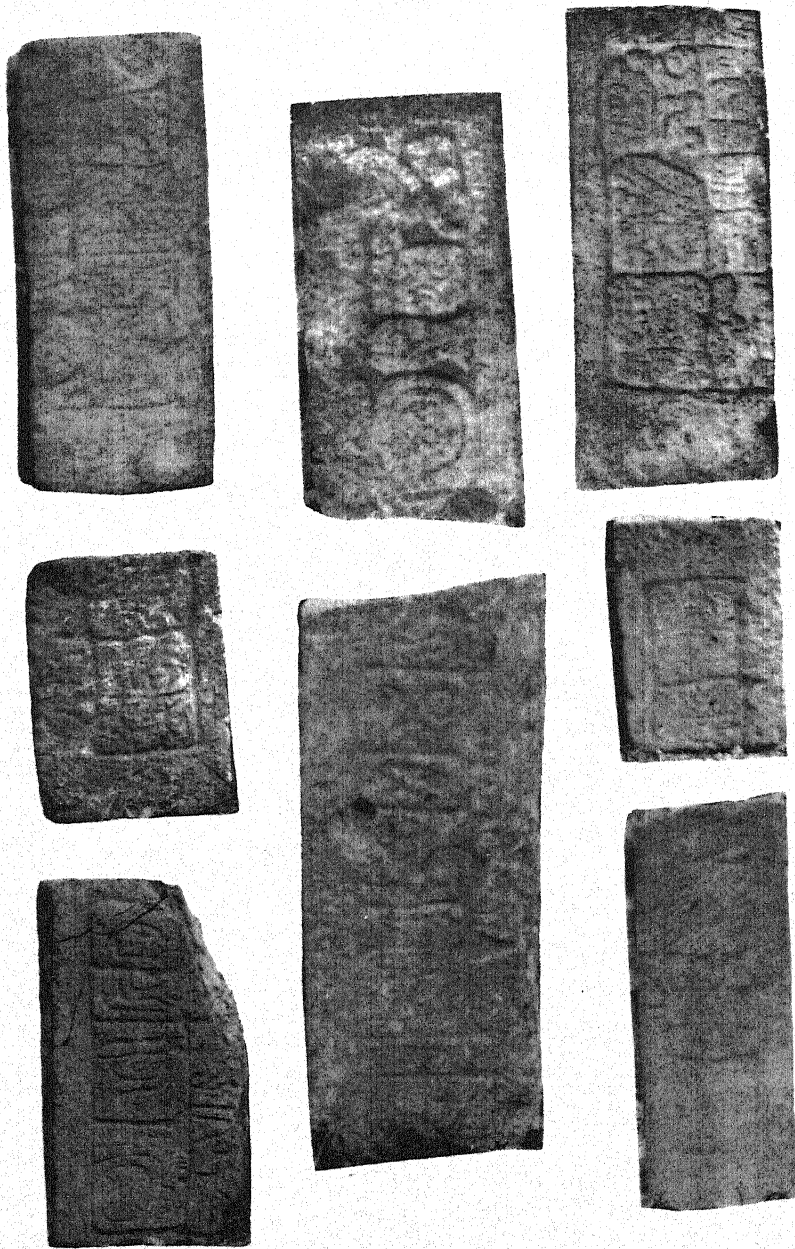


FIG. 15. Re-used stones with hieroglyphic inscriptions (courtesy of Carnegie Institution of Washington).

Among the stones a little to one side of the heap, I was much pleased to find the trunk of the idol, the head of which I had found in the narrow passage above. This idol will well repay special study as it has lain all these centuries untouched by time since unknown hands hurled it down from its honored place as a revered memento or sacred image. Its comparatively smooth surface still bears paint in many places [Fig. 22].

Close by the actual floor of the cave I found several hammer-stones and two small smooth stones of the general size and shape of grapeshot. And near the outer line of the central mound, buried seven inches in the debris, I found a curious flint crescent much resembling the golden ornaments of the same shape from the early tombs of Ireland. Space will not permit me to enumerate all the archaeological treasures found, but among the most interesting were some curiously wrought beads and pendants of jade, red stone, mother-of-pearl, and tiger's teeth.

It is worthy to remark that I found only two specimens of arrow-heads, one of obsidian and one of flint, and I think these were votive offerings and not used as actual weapons.

Besides the beautiful alabaster vase before described were found many interesting vessels in fragments.

The position of some of the jade specimens found, notably those of the large globular bead and the amulet accompanying it, close by the fragments of the beautiful alabaster vase, and the fact that I found large numbers of exceedingly small jade beads, unquestionably too fine to serve any other purpose than that of embroidered ornament, lead me to believe that some object, an armlet or embroidered loin cloth, was placed within the precious vase, and as it was thrown after the departed one into the black pit, the vase, fractured into many pieces, and the object, torn and wrenched apart, lay as it fell until the cords that bound it rotted into the black dust that I found beneath them, and each part covered with the gradually increasing dust of ages, like the diamond, with luster undimmed, awaited, unchanged, the gradual piling up of centuries.

Close examination of the two large jade ornaments just mentioned will show that some of the holes in each are still filled with portions of slender bone rods. These, when whole, probably served to stiffen and keep in place the heavier pieces of jade in the complicated designs of breastplate, armlet, or loin cloth of some great personage. I believe that the elaborate ornaments upon the persons of the

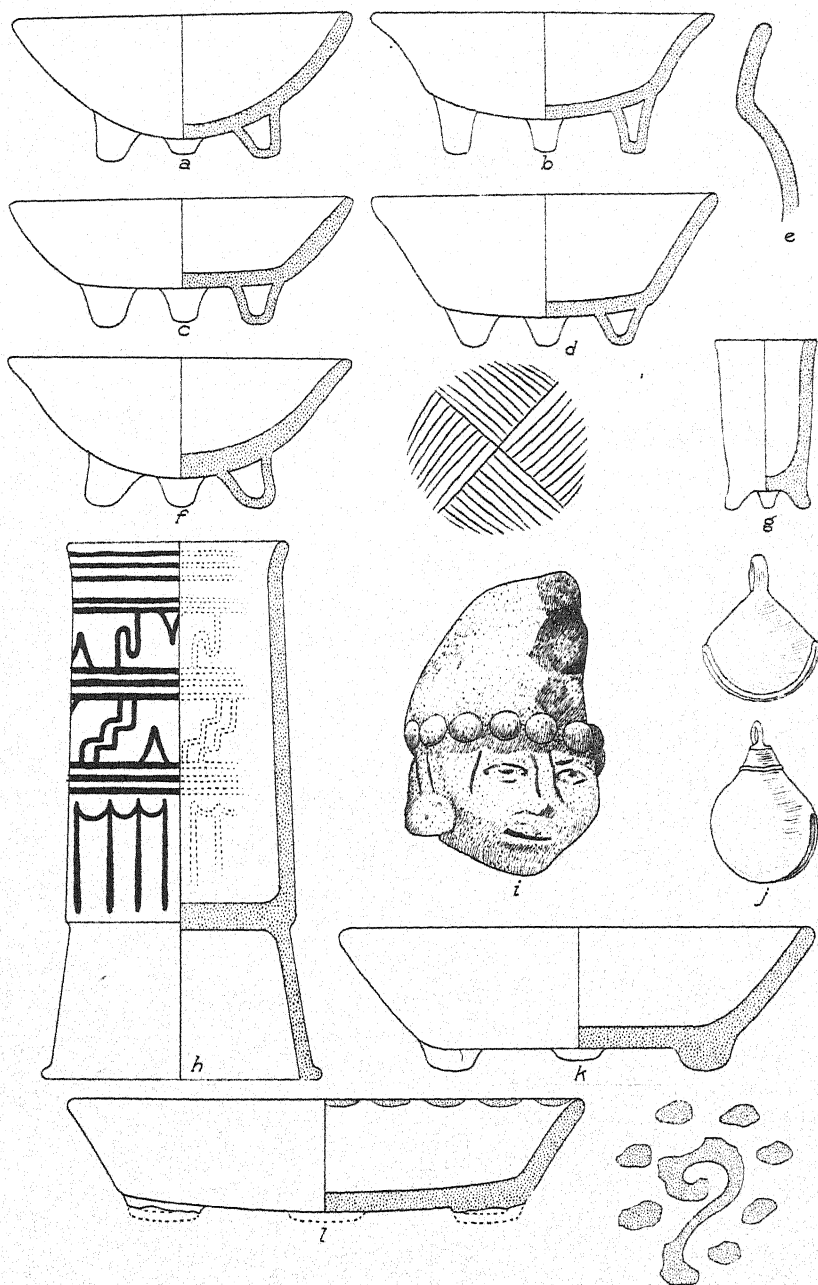


FIG. 16. Pottery vessels and copper bells. *a-d* and *f* are red ware; *g* is unslipped; *h* is black on Pecan Brown; *e* is painted blue; *k* and *l*, which may not be from the High Priest's Grave, are slate ware. Pottery vessels are one-quarter actual size; copper bells (*j*) and figurehead (*i*) one-half actual size.

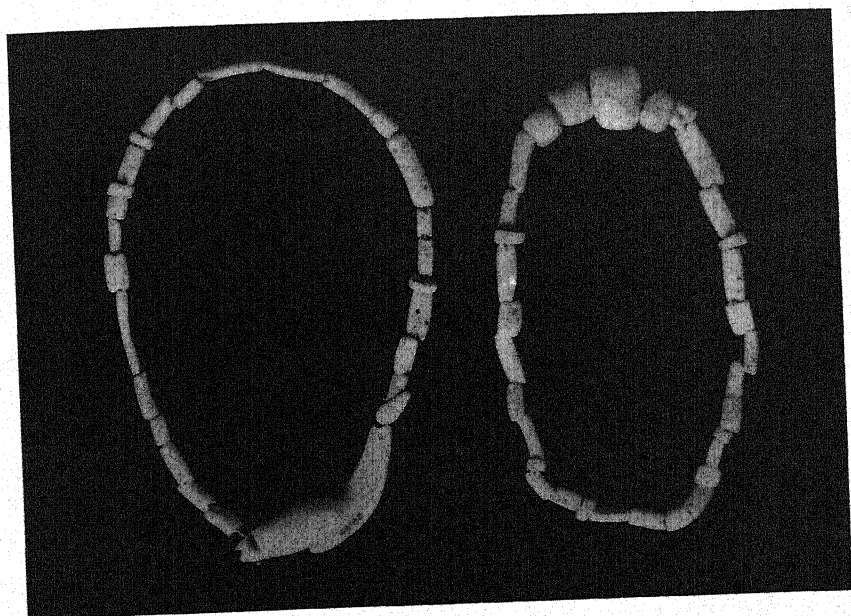
warriors and priests, carved upon the pillars amid these ruins, were of this class.

The question naturally arises in our minds: are not these finds of crystal beads, fine cut and clear; copper bells, well-made and handsomely formed; curious beads of jade hitherto practically unknown to archaeologists as coming from Yucatan, evidence of later or intrusive burials?

It is an archaeologist's duty, always, to guard against false data, and in cases where finds of an unusual character are concerned, to look first for evidence of intrusive burials. I did not neglect this important point. Of course, if I had found the original floor of the temple or other structure that once crowned the mound, unbroken over the actual opening of the shaft, it would have been ample proof that the burial places were those of the builders of the structure. This class of proof I have often obtained in other groups and even in this same group of Chichen Itza. But in this case I cannot claim it because the original floor has entirely disappeared, and I am bound to state that the stones that formed the graves were for the most part worked stones that had at one time formed a part of a structure. A portion of the stone filling between the graves was structure stones, and a portion of the fine dirt around some of the graves was composed of mortar or the crumbled stucco from a structure, and amid this debris I found many minute fragments of a fine blue frescoing that could only have come from the destroyed wall surface of some structure.

Among this filled-in debris I found two inscribed stone blocks. One was in the filling just above the fourth grave and the other in the mound at the bottom of the pit itself.

These facts, together with the finding of the broken and mutilated stone figure or idol—portions in different places within the line of the work—at first thought seem to point to the fact that the graves were those of a people buried within the ruins of a conquered city whose ruined structures served as monuments above them; whose dethroned and mutilated sacred images were thrown in as trophies and votive offerings, together with the valued objects of peace and friendship, upon the graves of the deceased victors. This, I state, might be the logical deduction and in many regions would be conclusive proof of intrusive burial. But upon the Peninsula of Yucatan special conditions exist that require special reasoning. The fact is, I think, well established that Chichen Itza has within its life history been subjected to the chances of war many times and with varying



a



b

FIG. 17. Beads. *a*, Of shell. *b*, Of crystal and turquoise. Diameter of largest is 2.2 cm.

results. But these wars have been internecine in their character, so far as we can learn, until the very last when the bearded white men of Castille lived and stood their siege within its stone chambers. Consequently, with the one exception just mentioned, and granting the fact of the conquerors burying their dead amid the ruined structures, it does not, in this case, constitute an intrusive burial within the anthropological sense of the term, both being members of the same race and possibly even relatives by blood.

In the foregoing I have granted the factor of war and warlike destruction, but I need not have granted it. In the little we know of the customs and life habits of this ancient period, it is certain that at intervals of time and especially after the death of great personages they made changes in their structures, remade wall surfaces, obliterated old mural paintings with a coating of hard finish, and made entirely new floors in the chambers beneath whose floors were the last buried remains. Consequently, it is well within the bounds of reason that the structure crowning this mound served as a religious shrine or *adoratorio* (*Ku*) of some important personage, and at his death or the death of the last of his line it was razed above his burial vault as the last mark of reverence to his memory.

Of course, these are to a certain extent mere conjectures and not to be confounded with facts actually proved, yet they are ideas founded upon a thorough study of these facts as they exist *in situ* and are, therefore, entitled to an expression, at least.



THE MOUND OF THE BURIAL SHAFT

BY EDWARD H. THOMPSON

[This letter to Dr. Holmes was certainly written before the report which forms the first section of this publication. It seemingly supplements a previous letter giving an account of the exploration of the shaft. It is given here since it outlines with greater detail work in the sanctuary.]

My last work upon this mound came to such an exciting climax that I was exceedingly anxious to complete the work and see what excavation would bring forth upon the southern half. Circumstances at length permitting, I commenced at the extreme southern portion of the mound and carefully excavated all of the fallen material that had accumulated upon the original platform of the terrace.

The outer or southern edge of this material yielded little except potsherds of the commonest classes and ordinary patterns scattered among fallen stonework and lime material near the floor.

As the work progressed toward the center, the fallen material increased in depth until between the four pillars, noted upon the plan in my previous report, it was fully nine feet deep; a general confused mass of wall and roof stones, fragments of mortar, and mortar dust, showing that this was indeed a roofed structure. Among these we came upon a curious figure carved in the round, a caryatid about four feet high with a monkey face [Fig. 14]. The figure was found imbedded among the fallen wall stones, but had luckily escaped serious injury. It was excavated with much care and difficulty and placed in a position tending to preserve it from future injury. Upon portions of the body and face, traces of a thin hard finish were clearly visible painted with pigments of blue and yellow.

As we gradually worked toward the central portion of the debris, traces of chamber walls were encountered until finally, at a distance of eight feet from the slanting columns marking the extreme southern termination of the upper platform, we came upon a well-preserved wall section extending directly across and barring our progress. Clearing away the material upon the opposite side of this wall we uncovered a small stone platform, unquestionably an altar. This altar, well built of cut stone and stucco, was two feet high, two and a half feet wide, and four feet long. It was built directly against the wall [west wall of inner room] above mentioned between the stone pillars, as will be seen by a glance at the accompanying sketch [Fig. 13, a]. The top of the altar was of hand-finished stucco with a central depression filled with fine ashes and fragments of smoke-

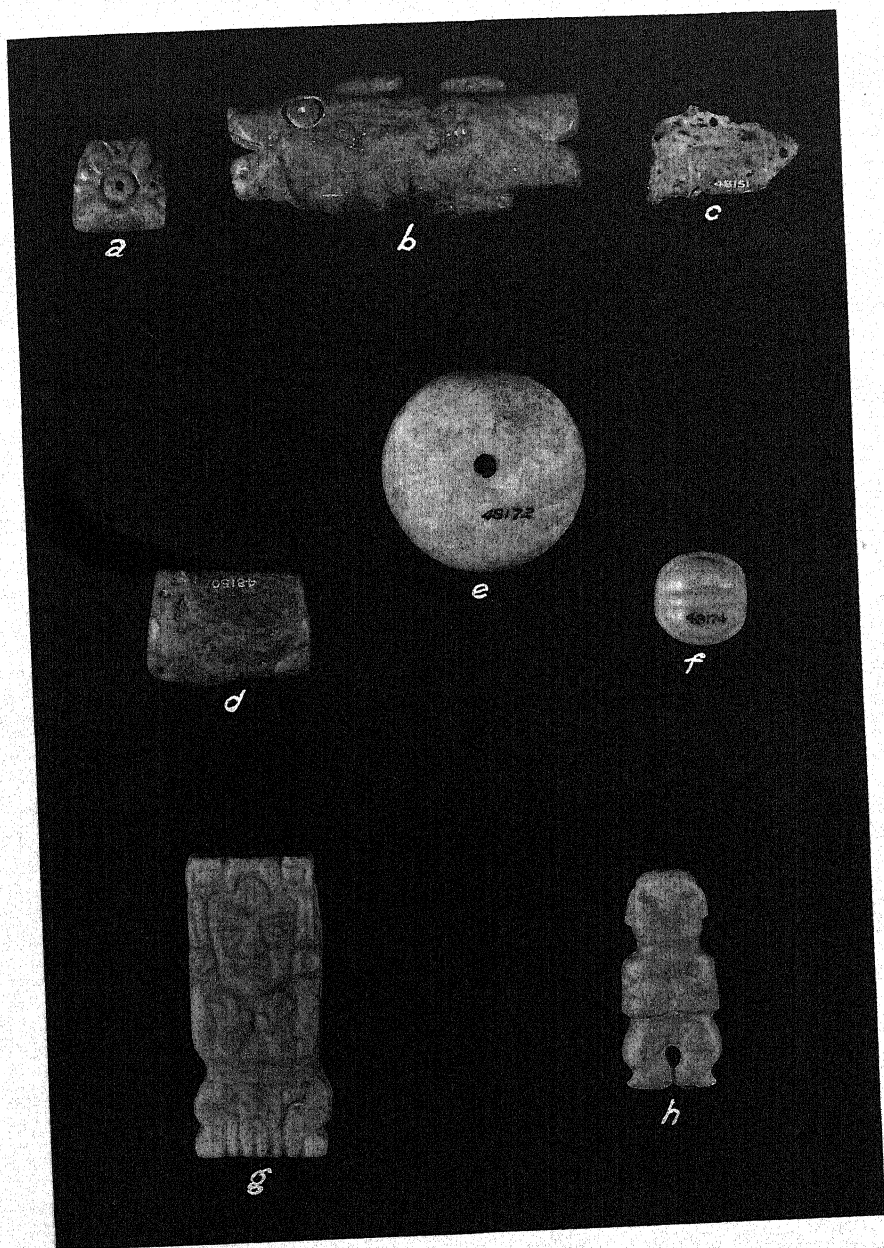


FIG. 19. Jade ornaments. Length of fish 7.7 cm.

blackened vessels, while the wall directly in the rear of the altar still bore very distinct traces of smoke from the altar fires. The evidence clearly indicated that various incense burners of large size and intricate figures, together with smaller vessels, were yet in position upon and around this altar when destroyed. Some of the fragments were actually forced into the material of the altar top, while others were pressed into red powder by the tremendous pressure of the fallen material above them. [The sketch shows the columns touching the wall. Actually they are detached. The altar top is shown as five long slabs, but the text mentions a stucco top and material in which sherds were imbedded.]

In the sequence of many of the fragments found I could seem to trace the hand of a wanton destroyer, breaking the sacred vessels of a conquered enemy prior to razing his temple. There were many pieces, some of large size, whose positions, when found, in relation to others of the same vessel were such as could only have been brought about by strong lateral blows.

Studying the matter on the spot I could not see any way by which falling material could have produced this result without absolutely reducing the fragments to powder. Great care was then taken in collecting these fragments, and not even the smaller pieces escaped us, but in some cases the potsherds were reduced to powder and consequently beyond redemption. The fragments saved are of a most interesting nature and merit detailed description [Fig. 4, b]. The larger incense burners were generally of a very elaborate form, approaching in that respect the magnificent specimen found, I believe, in Oaxaca and now in the National Museum at Mexico City.

The incense burners, the receptacles themselves, were of a cylindrical form, but the fronts of the vessels were so molded as to aid in forming the semblance of a human figure. Upon this as a foundation structure and to which yet green [before firing?] were affixed the molded portions to complete the human figure surrounded with the attributes of the deity to be worshipped and the complicated symbolism of the times.

Some of the masks representing human faces are exceedingly well made and exhibit none of that crude ferocity so often seen upon similar objects. The nose is in several specimens well formed, the nostrils clear cut and regular. The usual large circular ear ornaments are present in every case. The arms are well molded and natural; one specimen in particular will attract artistic attention, for, partially extended in an easy graceful manner, the hand turned upward

holds loosely in its grasp a globe. Other specimens of the upper limbs are adorned with colored bands, bracelets, and armlets of various patterns.

Upon the floor to the right of the altar lay a large round vessel almost unornamented except for a human face crudely worked out upon one side. It was crushed against the neighboring pillar by a large flat stone and was only preserved from being crushed to powder by a thick bed of ash, beneath, that allowed it to escape with only general fractures. As the pieces were assembled, the vessel reminded me of the "squash faces" of our early school day times [Fig. 14, b].

Other vessels, all more or less fragmentary, were encountered, but as they can best be described after being assembled, I shall not attempt it at this time.

The colors that were placed upon these vessels are yet vivid—chocolate brown, bright green, and a light blue predominating. Light yellow and a clear white are not uncommon colors. I am unable as yet to determine the nature of the pigments used to paint these vessels. The browns and some of the reds are without doubt based upon oxides of iron, while the blues and yellow are, according to a native artist whom I consulted, vegetal colors.

About nine inches to the front of the northwest corner of the altar base we found one of the little tripod votive vases [Fig. 16, g]. It was imbedded mouth down in the floor in such a position that only the legs were visible. It had been carefully cemented into its place. We succeeded in detaching it without injury and found it filled with compacted ashes, buried in which were various red beads of divers shapes. The altar itself was so racked by the general destruction that overtook the temple that as the detritus packed around it was removed, the entire stonework commenced to fall apart. After it had fallen, there were exposed to view three small chambers or rather pockets nearly in the center of the material forming the altar. These curious cavities only about four inches in diameter and a foot deep were clearly made during the construction of the altar. They were found to contain simply closely compacted gray ashes.

Near the middle of the narrow stone rim of the altar top was a curiously carved stone. I have seen this symbol or carved emblem elsewhere in this group and under closely similar circumstances. Directly beneath this carved symbol in the receding base was placed a large central stone carved with a design resembling in a degree the accompanying sketch [Fig. 13, a]. The carved portion was so

destroyed, apparently by fire, that only an approximate idea can be obtained of its original outline.

My hopes of finding upon this same mound a second burial shaft with its archaeological treasures were not to be gratified. Instead I found a solid core of rubble, and the twelve feet that I penetrated into this mass of material cost me much time and labor. This solid base of material, as firm as stone and nearly as durable, formed a foundation almost ideal in character and in marked contrast to the usual formation of terraced substructures of these ancient edifices.

Built as these terraces generally are of loose rubble hearting confined by walls of stone and material, they do not furnish a foundation at all in accord with our modern ideas of security. When to this fact is added that of shallow underpinning (for these old structures rarely extended their underpinning into the terrace material deeper than a yard) we may well wonder under what special law of nature they hold their title of longevity. The massive roof, often over a yard thick in its thinnest portion, binds by weight and cohesion the vaultlike inner wall and outer façade, keeping them erect and steady whatever the faults of the foundation may be.

Once let the roof be riven by the expanding fissure or growing roots, and it is only a question of time until the entire façade turning upon its base crashes prostrate in ruin. I have several times seen this demonstrated very clearly and have also found the entire façade lying prostrate, yet the sequence of the stones still so well preserved that it would not have been an impossible job to restore the façade in its old position, stone for stone.

The working up of these temple vessels, the gradual building up of the scattered fragments until the pristine outline of the vessel, if not entirely restored, yet is practically so (so far as comparative study is concerned), is a fascinating occupation. It is time- and nerve-exhausting, and requires skill and patience; yet it will often produce rich treasures from a pile of rusty-looking potsherds.

The constant handling and studying of these fragments reveal many curious and interesting facts to the trained observer. These facts and the sacred vessels themselves will form the material of a special report that awaits only the verification of certain data upon which I am working, to approach completion.

NOTES ON THE REPORT

BY J. ERIC THOMPSON

CONTENTS OF GRAVES

Grave 1.—In grave:

1 skeleton.

2 red vessels (1 entire; 1 crushed). Presumably these were tripod bowls of the types in Fig. 16, *a-c*.

Grave 2.—In soil above grave:

Some fragments of a handsome pottery mask. This is, perhaps, No. 48590 (Fig. 21), which still retains a considerable amount of blue, yellow, red, and black paint. Around the under side of the eyes, but not clearly visible in the photograph, are scrolls ending in simple curls from which are pendent two circles. The tip of the nose is missing. The features suggest Schellhas' God D. The globular beads of the necklace are unpainted; the cylindrical beads are painted blue. This would suggest a necklace in which cylindrical jade beads alternated with globular ones, perhaps of red shell. The clay is porous and the surface is unslipped.

Fragments of an incensario. Perhaps 48589 (Fig. 20). The vessel, made of a porous red clay, is unslipped. The wings are painted blue.

In grave:

1 skeleton.

2 small cracked red vessels. Presumably these were tripod bowls of the types shown in Fig. 16, *a-c*.

2 copper bells.

Several jade beads.

Grave 3.—In soil above grave:

Figurine head painted blue (Fig. 16, *i*).

Blue painted vessel. This may be No. 48591, several fragments of a globular bowl with a constricted neck. Unslipped but with blue paint on the exterior (Fig. 16, *e*).

In grave:

A terra-cotta mask.

Mixed bones, seemingly of several skeletons.



FIG. 20. Incense burner. The horizontal lines between the feet are wires. Height 36 cm.

1 whole and several broken vessels.

Some very fine jade beads, highly polished.

Several red shell beads.

Grave 4.—In soil above grave:

Potsherds.

Inscribed stone block. This, apparently, is a small cube of limestone (48207), each face of which is approximately 20 cm. high and of the same width. Three of them are decorated with designs resembling glyphs. The stone might have formed part of a pilaster placed against a doorway jamb.

In grave:

Sherds.

Many pendants of jade.

22 copper bells (S. E. corner).

Crystal and jade beads (N. W. corner).

3 small tripod bowls.

Several red shell beads.

Handsomely carved jade figure. The description "The handsomest I have yet seen" suggests the oblong amulet with the figure in low relief (48173; Fig. 19, *g*), but the number of holes in this would indicate that it was the beautiful jade amulet with slender bone rods in "some of the holes" found in the cavern (p. 34). In reality no slender bone rods are visible in any amulet at the present time, but since the only other handsomely carved jade figure is the human figure of "Charlie Chaplin" type, with only one suspension hole, jade amulet No. 48173 must have come from the cavern, and the "Charlie Chaplin" figure (48149; Fig. 19, *h*) was found in Grave 4. This type of figurine executed in jade, shell, or slate has been reported from Copan (Maudslay, 1889-1902, Vol. I, Plate 21), the Mountain Cow area of British Honduras (J. E. Thompson, 1931, Plate XXXV), San José, British Honduras, and Uaxactun, Guatemala (Ricketson and Ricketson, Plate 67, *e*).

A round jade bead. The red shell beads, the jade figure and round bead were beside one of the vessels in the north corner.



FIG. 21. Figure from front of incense burner. Note traces of painting, particularly the loops with pendent circles around the eyes. Height 31.4 cm.

Grave 5.—In soil above grave:

Sherds.

1 whole tripod vessel.

4 crystal beads.

3 copper bells.

Several small jades.

Jade and red shell beads.

Mass of what was apparently copal.

In grave:

1 skeleton.

1 red tripod vessel.

Several jade and red shell beads.

Grave 6.—In soil above grave:

Broken vessels.

Jade and red shell beads.

Several copper bells.

3 crystal beads.

In grave:

Skeleton turned to dust.

1 red tripod bowl with striated bottom (48158 or 48159). Both of these are 16 cm. in diameter and 6.7 and 7 cm. respectively, high. In contrast to several of the tripod bowls these two (Fig. 16, f) show no change of the angle between base and side, but are strictly semi-globular. Both are liberally coated with blue paint. Interior and exterior are slipped, 7'j (between Vinaceous Rufous and Hay's Russet). A sherd of a similar vessel was examined by Miss Anna Shepard, who reports it to be calcite tempered.

1 red tripod vessel. In view of the fact that two tripod bowls with striated bottoms are in Field Museum, catalogued as from the High Priest's Grave, one wonders whether Edward H. Thompson was not mistaken in stating that only one of the two vessels in this grave had a striated bottom.

Potsherds, most of which had striated bottoms.



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Grave 5.—In soil above grave:

Sherds.

1 whole tripod vessel.

4 crystal beads.

3 copper bells.

Several small jades.

Jade and red shell beads.

Mass of what was apparently copal.

In grave:

1 skeleton.

1 red tripod vessel.

Several jade and red shell beads.

Grave 6.—In soil above grave:

Broken vessels.

Jade and red shell beads.

Several copper bells.

3 crystal beads.

In grave:

Skeleton turned to dust.

1 red tripod bowl with striated bottom (48158 or 48159). Both of these are 16 cm. in diameter and 6.7 and 7 cm. respectively, high. In contrast to several of the tripod bowls these two (Fig. 16, f) show no change of the angle between base and side, but are strictly semi-globular. Both are liberally coated with blue paint. Interior and exterior are slipped, 7'j (between Vinaceous Rufous and Hay's Russet). A sherd of a similar vessel was examined by Miss Anna Shepard, who reports it to be calcite tempered.

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Potsherds, most of which had striated bottoms.

Grave 7.—In grave:

Sherds of vessels with striated bottoms.

3 crushed copper bells.

1 broken crystal bead.

Several jade beads.

1 large calcined jade bead.

1 tall vase with an annular base (48202; Fig. 16, *h*). The exterior of this vase is slipped dull Pecan Brown on which is painted a design in black. Very similar designs occur on vessels of the same form at Uaxac Canal (Vaillant, 1927, fig. 171) and in Tlaxcala (Marquina, 1928, p. 84). The form is reminiscent of one in untempered orange ware and generally believed to be from the Vera Cruz area (cf. Joyce, 1927, p. 113). However, the paste of the vessel from the High Priest's Grave is reported by Miss Anna O. Shepard to be calcite tempered, and she also identifies the black paint as of non-vegetal origin. Vases standing on annular bases were also in a Late cache in the Temple of the Warriors. These also were not of untempered fine orange ware (Morris, Charlot, Morris, 1931, p. 177).

Some charcoal.

2 small pieces of obsidian.

1 lump apparently of copal.

Several fragments, apparently of stucco, painted blue.

In passage from shaft:

Jade and crystal beads.

Copper bells.

1 calcined jade pendant (48179; Fig. 18, *f*).

1 portion of an image, blackened by action of fire. Not in Field Museum.

1 idol (perhaps 50248; Fig. 22).

1 head of an idol (48194; Fig. 23).

1 jade (?) pendant in the form of a fish (48148; Fig. 19). This has single transversal suspension hole.

Charred human bones.

Sherds of striated ware (unslipped?), but not of incensarios or sacred vessels (tripod bowls?).



FIG. 22. Painted stone figure. According to E. H. Thompson the trunk of this figure was found in the cavern, the head in the passage. The head is disproportionately large, raising the possibility that it does not belong to the trunk. Height 35.7 cm.

In cavern:

Jade ball with a transversal hole (48172; Fig. 19, *e*).

A beautiful jade amulet with slender bone rods in some of the holes. This is probably 48173, Fig. 19, *g*, but see discussion under Grave 4. A drawing of the back of this by Spinden (1913, figs. 197-198) shows the arrangements of holes for suspension or attachment.

Curiously wrought beads and pendants of jade. Perhaps the beetle-shaped ornaments, one of which is illustrated (48174; Fig. 19, *f*).

Many minute jade (?) beads. These are probably turquoise beads (Fig. 17, *b*) stated to have come from the High Priest's Grave, as there are no minute jade beads from Chichen Itza in Field Museum.

Marble vase (48201; Fig. 24) with a simple interlocking Tau design. There are traces of red paint over a large part of the surface.

Crescentic flint (48189; Fig. 18, *j*) with tip missing. Perhaps classifiable with eccentric flints.

Several hammerstones. One only is in Field Museum. This is a roughly globular ball of hard limestone with diameter approximately 3.2 cm.

Shell beads.

Two rectangular plaques of mother-of-pearl (48181), 6 by 6.8 cm. Both are very thin and have a hole through the center. Both have traces of red paint.

1 obsidian arrowhead (Fig. 18, *h*).

1 flint arrowhead, probably that shown in Fig. 18, *i*.

1 canine of a jaguar (48167; Fig. 18, *c*).

3 shell imitations of jaguar canines (Fig. 18, *a*, *b*, and *d*).

Stucco fragments painted blue. Not in Field Museum.

Half-charred human bones.

1 trunk of an idol. This fits the head in the passage. The limestone figure is of typical Mexican style (Fig. 22). The head and much of the trunk are painted red, and there is a band painted blue immediately below the breast ornament.

Inscribed stone block. Not in Field Museum.

2 pearls with holes for suspension. These pearls were presented to Field Museum in 1925 by Edward H. Thompson, who related that in the course of a recent visit to the cavern he had found them on the floor, evidently overlooked in 1896.

Many interesting vessels in fragments. See under "Other Pottery Vessels" (p. 54).

SKELETAL REMAINS

The name of High Priest's Grave was given to this structure by Edward Thompson, and, although there is little or no justification for this designation, it is now so firmly established that it has been retained in this publication, although not used in Edward Thompson's original report or in his letter to Dr. W. H. Holmes. In his account of the excavations, quoted by Willard (p. 260), he says: "Beyond question I had uncovered the last resting place of a priest obviously of very high rank. Reason and logic and facts carry us thus far. But those five hidden graves, each guarding the ones below and blocking the way to the deep secret passage and the pit at its end wherein lay the sacred relics of the arch priest—how may these be explained? It is here that the mysterious assurance came to me—the sure intuition, if you will—that this was not merely the tomb of a great priest but the tomb of *the* great priest, the tomb of the great leader, the tomb of the hero god, Kukul Can, he whose symbol was the feathered serpent."

Here E. H. Thompson disregards tradition, which is unanimous in sending the shadowy Kukulcan back to central Mexico during his lifetime.

Dr. Thomas Gann, who visited Chichen Itza in 1918, also expresses his doubt that the pyramid was ever the burial place of high priests. He writes: "What leads me to this conclusion is that amongst the debris from the three chambers, which the excavator had left on the floor of the temple as worthless, I discovered the petrous portion of the temporal bone (the most indestructible part of the whole skull) of a child about five years of age. Now if this had been the mausoleum of the high priests, certainly no child would have been buried there..." (T. Gann, 1924, p. 214.) Bones of a child were also found by Harrington behind the face of the shaft (Fig. 4, *a*).

NOTES ON ARTIFACTS

Red Tripod Bowls.—Field Museum possesses ten complete or incomplete red tripod bowls in addition to two complete and one fragmentary red tripod bowl, all with striated bottoms. All, seemingly, are from shaft burials and are slipped 7j on interior and exterior as far as junction with base, if defined. Those without well-defined bases may have whole exterior surface slipped or unslipped and left rough. Several retain blue paint applied to interiors and exteriors after firing.

Two sherds of red tripod bowls were examined by Miss Anna O. Shepard, who finds them to be calcited temper.

There are two well-defined forms. In the first, more correctly a dish, sides outcurve gently from an almost flat base (Fig. 16, *b-d*). In the second, to which bowls with striated bases belong, the form is semiglobular without modification (Fig. 16, *f*). There is a third, but less well-defined form, in which an almost flat base is associated with incurving sides. Unfortunately, there is no certain information as to whether these forms are confined to certain graves, but the general information on the burial shaft would indicate that all the graves are probably contemporaneous. Should there, however, have been any lapse of time, the semiglobular form must have been earliest, since the tripod bowl with scoriated base occurs in the lowest grave. A passage in the Willard version suggests that the two forms occurred together. Most of the vessels have diameters 15.5 to 16.3 cm., but in two cases diameters fall to 13.5 cm. Height measurements are 4.5 to 7 cm. Feet are conical with points truncated and slightly round. Interiors are hollow, but connected with exteriors by vent holes. Red ware tripod bowls of these forms from the Sacred Cenote and elsewhere in Chichen Itza are in Peabody Museum, Cambridge (Mass.). Some of those from the Sacred Cenote, used to hold balls of copal, were also covered with blue paint. Other tripod bowls of this type were in the talus of the fallen northeast corner of the lower platform of the Caracol (Ruppert, fig. 48).

Other Pottery Vessels.—Two pottery vessels are illustrated in Fig. 16, *k, l*, but it is not certain that they were in the High Priest's Grave. They are catalogued as from that structure, but at least one other vessel catalogued as from the High Priest's Grave was, according to E. H. Thompson's notes, found in the Temple of the Initial Series. On the other hand, they are not represented in the series of water colors, illustrating pottery and other artifacts, which accompanied the original report. Eventually, information on ceramic



FIG. 23. Stone head. Presumably, this is the head stated to have been found in the passage. Height 17.9 cm.

sequences in Yucatan will decide whether the association of these two vessels with the red ware tripod bowls is chronologically possible.

The first is a tripod bowl of slate ware with three slab feet. The design of a query mark (Cib or Caban sign?) surrounded by dots is painted in a reddish brown, probably bleached black. The paste is tuff-tempered (Fig. 16, *l*). The second is an incomplete bowl of the same form, but with somewhat thicker walls. The slip resembles that of slate, but has an orange tinge. The paste is plentifully tempered with an opaque substance, probably gray limestone (Fig. 16, *k*).

Copper Bells.—All copper bells are of the forms shown in Fig. 16, *j*.

Crystal Beads.—There are thirty-four crystal beads in Field Museum now strung on a single wire (Fig. 17, *b*). All show very clearly the biconical bores by which they were pierced for suspension. The range in diameter is 1 to 2.2 cm. Five small segments had been removed for decorative purposes from the surfaces of two beads; three from another.

Jade Ornaments.—The beetle-shaped jade ornament (48174; Fig. 19, *f*) is one of six of the same form. Each is perforated for suspension or attachment by a pair of dowel holes made in the center of the slightly rounded back. With the exception of one cylindrical bead with grooved bands at each end, jade beads are undecorated. Many are triangular in cross section. Few are of good jade.

In addition to the jade shown in Fig. 19, a broken jade earplug is attributed to the High Priest's Grave.

Stone Figures.—In the Temple of the High Priest's Grave there are at present three stone figures. One of these is a squat Atlantean figure (Fig. 14) similar to those that supported altar tops in the Temple of the Warriors, the Temple of the Tables, and the Temple of the Jaguars. It is difficult to conceive of the original purpose in placing this figure in the Temple of the High Priest's Grave, since the altar of this temple, as shown in Thompson's sketch, had a solid front with a peculiar design. The Atlantean figure has a beaklike face resembling that of the Mexican wind god Eecatl, and is undoubtedly the one mentioned by Edward H. Thompson (p. 39).

The other two (Fig. 11) are not of the Atlantean type. Since there is no mention of them in Thompson's account, and as each has a tenon at the back, level with the shoulders, they doubtlessly



FIG. 24. Marble vase. Found in the cavern. Originally painted red. Height 11.2 cm.

served as decorative elements in the façade, resembling in function stone figures found in the excavation of the Temple of the Warriors and *in situ* in the east Annex of the Monjas and at Uxmal (Seler). Stylistically they are closer to façade decorative elements from Uxmal. They appear to represent individuals garbed and masked as owls, a common Maya practice. One of the stone figures is seated; the other, which lacks a head, is standing.

Thompson, working from the south edge of the terrace on which the temple stands, failed to clear the whole summit. These façade ornaments might not have been found by him had they fallen from the east or north façades to the section of terrace immediately outside the exterior wall of the ambulatory. That Thompson did not clear the whole superstructure is shown by his plan (not published), which indicates no ambulatory, the exterior walls of that feature and the walls between it and the inner room not being marked. This is strange, for Maudslay's map, made in 1889 and based on what was visible without excavation, shows all the essential features of the structure as incorporated in Harrington's ground plan.

THE SHAFT

J. C. Harrington's plan of the shaft shows that the enlargement at the twentieth course is 4.80 meters below the top, within a few centimeters of the depth (16 feet) at which E. H. Thompson states that the first grave was found (p. 20). This might indicate that the enlarged area had been built to hold burials, the final 4.80 meters of the shaft having been designed for the sole purpose of access.

THE INTRASTRUCTURE

The position of the section of vault soffit found by Harrington while mapping the shaft (Fig. 4, *a*) would suggest that the intrastructure, of which it once formed a part, could not have had a floor level more than a few centimeters above present plaza floor level. The vault soffit was still visible opposite the twenty-ninth course, approximately 2.60 meters above present plaza floor level, but at Chichen Itza a height less than 2.60 meters from floor to spring of vault is exceptionally low. It is not improbable that the present exterior level does not represent the original plaza, in which case the floor of the intrastructure might have been lower than that of the present plaza. In any case, the intrastructure was unsupported by a substructure, or, at the best, stood on an extremely low one, since the space between bed rock and opposite the twenty-ninth course is

not sufficient for both a building with a normally placed vault spring and a supporting platform, unless the latter had been very low.

DATE OF THE PRESENT TEMPLE

Attention has already been called to the very marked resemblance of the ground plan of the present structure to that of the Castillo. This close similarity would indicate a short interval between the erection of the two structures. In the employment of an inner chamber within an ambulatory with doorways in four directions and, less markedly, in the use of façade statuary, there is a vague connection with the Caracol (Ruppert, 1935).

On the other hand, in the use of portal columns fashioned as feathered serpents with rectangular bodies the Temple of the High Priest's Grave should be grouped with the Warriors' Temple rather than with the Castillo, Chac Mool, or Jaguars' structures, which have round feathered serpent columns. Similarly the Atlantean support is shared by the High Priest's Grave and the Warriors. These links with the Castillo on the one side; and with the Warriors, undoubtedly later than the Castillo, on the other, can be interpreted by considering the Temple of the High Priest's Grave transitional between the Castillo and the Temple of the Warriors, and as also later than the Chac Mool Temple.

The writer of these notes has recently suggested that the dedicatory date of the inscriptions carved on the east face of the southeastern column of the Temple of the High Priest's Grave was 10.9.0.0.0, (A.D. 1007), the best reading of the whole inscription (Figs. 10 and 25) being 10.8.10.11.0, 2 Ahau 18 Mol falling in a Tun 11 of a Katun (10.9.0.0.0) ending on 2 Ahau. However, at the same time it was pointed out that the asymmetrical position of this inscription in relation to the column on which it is carved and in relation to the whole building suggests that the drums on which it occurs have been re-used (J. E. Thompson, 1937, p. 185). Some time must have elapsed to allow of re-use of materials.

Furthermore, if we are correct in placing the Temple of the High Priest's Grave after the present Castillo structure on stylistic grounds, the date 10.9.0.0.0 can scarcely be contemporaneous, as this date falls only one Katun after the supposed introduction of Mexican features by the Itzas under Kukulcan, and such a short interval would scarcely allow of the establishment of so many Mexican features which are absent in the Caracol, tentatively dated (J. E. Thompson, 1937, pp. 182-183) as 10.8.0.0.0, Katun 4 Ahau (A.D. 987).

There are, therefore, grounds for placing the construction of the temple at a date perhaps considerably later than the start of the first Mexican period.

The fragments of incensarios found around the altar (p. 42) must represent a period subsequent to that of the burials. Presumably they are contemporaneous with the Spanish conquest. Unfortunately, most of these are not in Field Museum, and are known only by sketches which accompanied the original report (Fig. 13, b).

DATE OF SHAFT BURIALS

The burials in the shaft must be contemporaneous with or later than the Temple, provided one makes the assumption that the temple was built at the same time as the present outer substructure. It does not seem probable that the shaft could have been sunk after the substructure had been enlarged to its final form, for the looseness of typical Maya substructure fill would have made this extremely difficult. Even with tighter fill, such as Edward H. Thompson says was found in this substructure, the sinking of the shaft after the completion of the substructure would have been difficult. Furthermore, had the shaft been sunk after completion of the substructure in its present form, its lower part would scarcely have been made wider than its upper part. Clearly shaft and present substructure are contemporaneous. On the other hand, the cavern under the shaft may have been connected with the earlier temple now buried in the present structure, but the shaft burials must postdate this earlier construction.

The contents of the graves themselves tend to support the belief that both burials and temple are subsequent to the start of the Mexican period. Crystal beads and copper bells seemingly belong to a somewhat late Mexican horizon. The incensario types and the tall vase with flaring, annular base, are also indicative of a late horizon.

THE DATE OF THE CONTENTS OF THE CAVERN

Before assuming that the contents of the cavern can not be later than the shaft burials, one must consider the possibility of another means of access to it.

Everyone who has descended to the passage of the cavern comments on the freshness of the air, and several persons have noted a definite current, suggesting that there exists another outlet to the cavern. There is a tradition, perhaps of quite recent origin, that a cave in the side of the cenote of Xtoloc, about five meters above

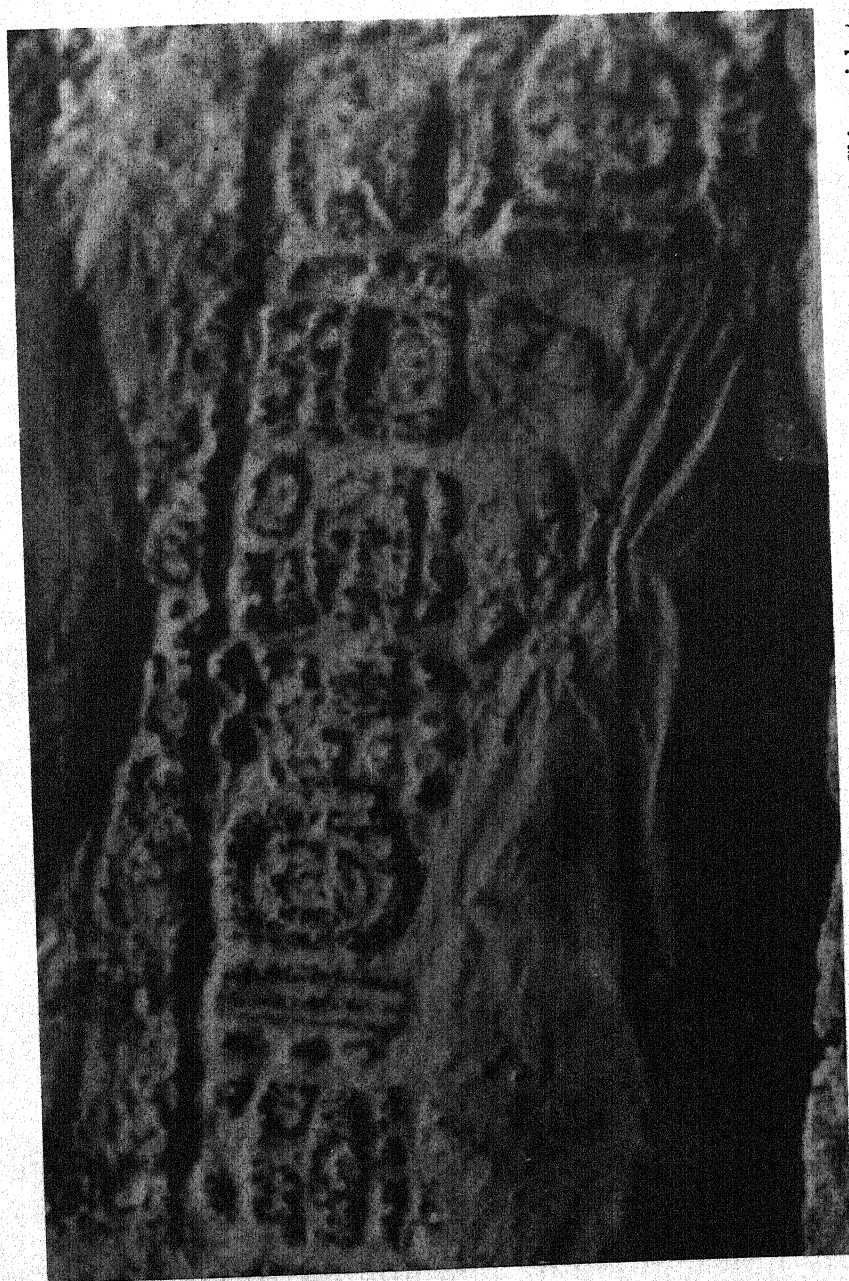


FIG. 25. Column with inscription. The inscription has been covered with paper and treated with Chinese ink to bring out details. It reads best as (10.8.10.11.0) 2 Ahau 18 Mol falling in Tun 11 of a Katun (10.9.0.0.0) ending on 2 Ahau (rubbing and photograph by Conrad Kratz).

water level, communicates with the cavern of the High Priest's Grave, but owing to cave-ins no one has ever succeeded in ascertaining whether this is so. There are many fissures in the cavern, one of which might conceivably be the entrance to such a passage or there may well be some totally different explanation for the current of fresh air. Purely as a speculation one might hazard that the cavern was once a cenote. In that case the current of air might come from some deep fissure which once was an underground stream. There is at present no evidence that such a passage could have been large enough for a man to crawl through. In any case Edward H. Thompson's discovery of the head of a stone figure in the passage and the trunk of the same figure in the cavern, together with the fact that the finds were principally in the pile of soil immediately below the hole from the passage, would indicate rather strongly that the contents of the cavern are not of more recent date than the contents of the burial shaft. Turquoise, found in the cavern, is also late, but is indirectly associated with the period of the High Priest's Grave temple. Actually, the turquoise was in the intra-Castillo temple, but had been placed there when work on the present Castillo started.

THE WILLARD-THOMPSON VERSION

Mr. T. A. Willard devotes one chapter of his book "The City of the Sacred Well" to an account of the excavation of the High Priest's Grave as told to him by Edward H. Thompson. The account, which differs very considerably from Thompson's own report, is given with quotation marks. The shaft is said to have contained five graves instead of the seven listed in Thompson's report. We are told that several of the burials were provided with one shallow red tripod bowl and a gourd-shaped bowl apiece. In Field Museum there are no gourd-shaped bowls except those modified by tripod supports. This would suggest that one shallow tripod bowl and one semiglobular tripod bowl were found together in several of the graves.

The Willard-Thompson version also mentions "a bowl-shaped vessel gray colored and smooth." This description would perhaps fit the slate ware tripod bowl, which, as we have seen, might have come from one of the burials (p. 56).

The report states that the skeleton of Burial 3 was placed on right side with knees to chin and with hands clasped around the legs, while Grave 1 contained two skeletons. Much credit should not be given this statement, as material is listed in the Willard-Thompson account which is not in Field Museum and not mentioned in Thomp-

son's original report, while many statements in the later version are at variance with the original. Thus, in the Willard-Thompson description the marble vase was filled with jade and other offerings, including a "large plaque with surfaces richly carved and representing conventionalized human figures with religious regalia," whereas the mended condition of the vase supports Thompson's original statement that it was found broken. The large plaque representing conventionalized human figures can only be the jade ornament shown in Fig. 19, *g*.

Other discrepancies, such as the depth of the first grave, given as sixteen feet in the original report, but as twelve feet in the Willard-Thompson version, serve to confirm that the later account, written twenty-nine years after the excavations, was based entirely on Thompson's memory, which in the last decade of his life was not good.



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